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Red Harvests

You had to admire a hero like the Spider. He would be trapped in a locked room—wearing his Spider costume, surrounded outside by police thirsty for his blood, police he heroically refused to battle. Nevertheless, he would ritualistically brand the foreheads of the 18 or 20 crooks he had just slaughtered, marking them with the seal of the Spider.

Nifty little arachnid illustration it was—an imprint in crimson to announce to all that these were evildoers sent to dusty death by the Spider. It was his trademark in the tradition of Zorro and El Kabong.

Then, surrounded, trapped, all but caught, the Spider would calmly wait as the police rushed pell-mell up the stairs. The brand (part of his cigarette lighter) was in his pocket; his automatics, still red hot from action, secreted in his coat. And the Spider just sat there twiddling his thumbs—evidence of his homicidal heroism all about him—as the cops knocked on the door.

This guy was either *really* cool or incredibly stupid.

Well, draw your own conclusions.

Me? I always thought the Spider enjoyed tempting fate (or Fate as the pulps would say) in a way that his colleagues of the night, The Shadow and Batman, mostly avoided. The Spider seemed to be thinking, "Just *how close* can I get to exposing my identity, getting caught by the police and taking the rap for all these dead underworld vermin yet still escape with my good name and all my bullets?"

Or at least that's my memory. I'm no *Spider* expert. I've read just a dozen Spider adventures—including all thus far reprinted in paperback: four by Berkley circa 1970, four (unnecessarily updated) by Pocket several years later and three more by Dimedia in the mid-80s. And that scene I described? That's what I remember from a Spider novel I read *21 years* ago. So, I may have exaggerated it just a tad, for dramatic effect. I plead pulp fans' license.

The Spider's adventures, you see, were bloody affairs. Today, I took time out and read *Prince of the Red Looters* (reprinted as *The Prince of Evil*). The villain, the Fly kills a couple of thousand innocent people in this book; the Spider knocks off only 100 or so crooks and gangsters. That's how you can tell he's the hero—he kills fewer people. And they *asked* for it.

Doc Savage and The Shadow are still my favorites, but I like the Spider, too. How could you not admire a good guy who thinks dressing up like a hunchback scares the underworld? Sure it does, Spider. *Sure.*

Anyhow, there's good news for Spider fans. Carroll & Graf is reprinting two more Spider novels (*The Spider and the Pain Master, Secret City of Crime*) in one $4.95 volume out in May. And writer/artist Tim Truman has masterminded a new Eclipse comic book to bring this '30s hero into the '90s—as he tells our pulp expert Will Murray on page 39. I've already read an advance copy of the first issue of Truman's *Spider* and it's terrific, exciting stuff!

Of course, given the Spider's infrequent appearances over the last half-century, I can't really expect most of you readers to readily know who he is. So, let's place him in somewhat more contemporary terms. Consider the Spider a more psychotic Batman...Wolverine without the claws...The Shadow with a nose job. He's sort of a more serious Punisher....Lobo with fewer jokes...or a really vicious Garfield.

—*David McDonnell/Editor*

COMICS SCENE RETURNS soon enough as **The Rocketeer** launches into theaters and **Bill Campbell**, the aerial adventurer who's afraid of flying, talks about the role in **COMICS SCENE #20, on sale June 25, 1991. MEANWHILE**, next month heralds the return of **COMICS SCENE SPECTACULAR** in a modified format (with gatefold posters) with **Hank Ketcham**, discussing the problems of raising that menace named Dennis. Plus: all the regular mutants, vigilantes and silly Toons. Look for **COMICS SCENE SPECTACULAR #4, on sale May 28, 1991.**

COMICS SCENE

Wild West Wolverine

Wolverine gets grizzly—in these very rough sketches by Todd Fox.

Wolverine Art: Todd Fox/Copyright 1991 Marvel Entertainment Group

After "Weapon X," Barry Windsor-Smith's multi-part origin of Wolverine, concludes, *Marvel Comics Presents* will showcase another look into Logan's unexplored past.

"I'm writing a Wolverine story, which is a character I had never thought I would be writing," says writer/artist Tim Truman, best known for his acclaimed *Scout* series.

"Marvel approached me and said, 'Would you like to do a Wolverine story and set it in the Old West?' They said they wanted it set in the 1840s or '50s, and they wanted Indians. That touched a nerve so I thought, 'Maybe I can do something with this.' I started thinking about him being Canadian, and immediately I said, 'Hudson Bay Company, fur traders in the West. Hmmmm.' I wanted to throw a monster in there, so this is a rip-roaring Blackfoot monster story with Wolverine in it!"

The series, titled "Wild Frontier" and drawn by Todd Fox, will fill in aspects of Wolverine's origin not revealed in "Weapon X."

"I'm kind of playing with that suggested myth Marvel has that Wolverine is somehow immortal," Truman explains. "We have the origin of the original costume, and the reason he wears a mask. And the way he got the name Wolverine. I wrote it a bit ambiguously. It's set up so that we're never sure if this is something that actually happened, or if it's only a fantasy Wolverine is having."

Current continuity says Logan acquired his adamantium claws in the 1960s, so the Wild West Wolverine will be armed with a 19th century equivalent.

"Since it is the 1840s," Truman concludes, "he's carrying around these two big knives that he got off this guy he knows in Texas. They're like big Bowie knives. The actual story is taken from a Blackfoot legend, 'The Story of Uncigila.' She's a serpent monster who's also a witch. If you look at this monster, you go insane, your *family* goes insane, and *then* you die!"

Although "Wild Frontier" is months from seeing print, Truman is already working on "Wild Frontier II," which promises to delve into Logan's relationship with Sabertooth and Wild Child.

—*Will Murray*

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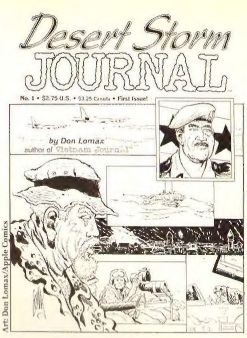
Two Terminators

With the success of their first *Terminator* mini-series and the upcoming release of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, Dark Horse Comics is publishing *Terminator: Secondary Objectives*. Scheduled to ship in June, the four-issue mini-series will be written by James Robinson and pencilled by Paul Gulacy. In addition to featuring the first series' remaining band of heroes, who must stop an earlier enemy cyborg from killing Sarah Connor, *Secondary Objectives* introduces a second Terminator. Meanwhile, Marvel Comics is also expected to release a continuing *Terminator* series, as well as an adaptation of the upcoming movie, becoming the third company to publish a *Terminator* title, after Dark Horse and Now Comics.

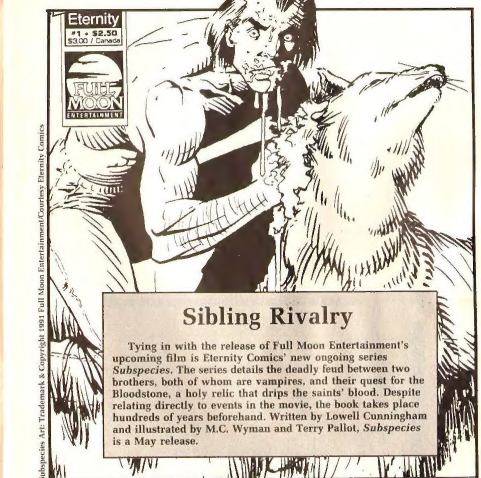
Art: Paul Gulacy/Robert Ian/ Dark Horse Comics



Art: Don Lomax/Apple Comics

Comics Go to War

The war in the Persian Gulf may now be one for the history books, but it's also one for the comic books. As soon as the war began in January, Apple Comics began work on *Desert Storm Journal* #1. *Vietnam Journal*'s Don Lomax is handling the scripting and art chores for this new project, which is expected to hit comic stores by May. In addition, Apple is publishing a second edition of its *Winning in the Desert* manuals. The war has also become a hit with the Japanese, whose current bestselling comic is a 300-page collection called *Iraq vs. U.S.-Led Multinational Forces*.



Subspecies Art: Trademark & Copyright 1991 Full Moon Entertainment/Courtesy Eternity Comics

Sibling Rivalry

Tying in with the release of Full Moon Entertainment's upcoming film is Eternity Comics' new ongoing series *Subspecies*. The series details the deadly feud between two brothers, both of whom are vampires, and their quest for the Bloodstone, a holy relic that drips the saints' blood. Despite relating directly to events in the movie, the book takes place hundreds of years beforehand. Written by Lowell Cunningham and illustrated by M.C. Wyman and Terry Pallot, *Subspecies* is a May release.

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By MICHAEL McAVENNIE

RUNNING THE INFINITY GAUNTLET

Assembling as many heroes as possible, Jim Starlin confronts a crisis in the Marvel Universe.

Over the years, writer/artist extraordinaire Jim Starlin has been known to bring many good things to an end. He was responsible for the deaths of Adam Warlock, Marvel Comics' Captain Marvel and, most recently, Jason Todd, the second Robin. This time, however, Starlin and artist George Perez pull out all the stops with *The Infinity Gauntlet*, Marvel's new six-issue mini-series, by killing half of *all* the living beings in the universe.

"*The Infinity Gauntlet* is the accumulation of what has been going on in *The Silver Surfer* and *The Thanos Quest*," says Starlin about his new project. "Thanos has put the six [Soul] Gems on a glove and now has control of all power: the mind, the soul, time, space and reality. In effect, he *is* God, a supreme being in this reality. Having accomplished this in *Thanos Quest*, *Infinity Gauntlet* is about him finally exercising the power, and the Marvel heroes banding together to stop him."

Unable to stop Thanos in his own book, the Silver Surfer returns to Earth and warns Dr. Strange about the threat of the all-powerful villain. Simultaneously, Adam Warlock will also make his return. According to the scribe, these three characters play major roles throughout *Infinity Gauntlet*. As for who else will appear in the series, Starlin says, "We'll have Eros, Firelord, Thor, the Hulk, the Vision, Scarlet Witch, Sub-Mariner, She-Hulk, Cloak, Wolverine, Cyclops, Spider-

Starlin promises that the impact of *The Infinity Gauntlet* will be felt by the Avengers and others in their own titles.

According to Starlin, the idea behind *Infinity Gauntlet* was unintentionally developed from a growing storyline he had been working on in *Silver Surfer*. "The story just sort of germinated and was given birth to during the time I was working on it," he explains. "The Thanos storyline led off into his own mini-series for two issues, and many folks suggested that I do some kind of a major crossover with him because they felt he was currently the most powerful villain in the Marvel Universe. So, I started tinkering with the idea several months ago, and I knew he was leading up to the point where he would become a god. It was the kind of story where you set up a premise like that, and a story falls into place as to what it should be about. I eventually even had to give up *Silver Surfer* because of the time I wound up spending on *Infinity Gauntlet*."

The impact that *Infinity Gauntlet* will have on the Marvel Universe will result in numerous crossovers with several titles, including *Amazing Spider-Man, Avengers, Avengers West Coast, Deathlok, Dr. Strange, The Incredible Hulk, The Mighty Thor, Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD, The Silver Surfer, Sleepwalker, Spectacular Spider-Man* and *Web of Spider-Man*.

As for which characters are affected, Starlin admits, "That's a tough one for me to answer, because much of it is determining what happens in the individual books that are crossing over with the series. What we're setting up

All Infinity Gauntlet Art: George Perez

Man, Iron Man... At some point or another, George Perez will be drawing every hero in the Marvel Universe.

"As the battle progresses, other Marvel characters will also become involved, including Eternity, Galactus, the Stranger and Quasar," he adds. "There are also two new cosmic characters called Love and Hate, as well as the Watcher, the Celestials, Lord Order and Master Chaos. It's going to be a grab bag of characters. Almost everybody is going to make an appearance in this series.

"Mephisto will also be there, acting as sort of a 'sidekick' for Thanos. Eventually, however, Mephisto's going to betray him." Despite letting readers in on this information, the writer doesn't think he's actually revealing anything. "It's really no big secret. After all, what else is Mephisto going to do?" he laughs.

Now that Thanos is a supreme being, Starlin points out that he will use the Infinity Gauntlet in his attempts to win the love of Death. "One of the first things he's going to do is fulfill his obligation to Death, now that he has the power of everything in the universe. That obligation was to obliterate one-half of the universe, because she felt it was 'over-populated.' And he does all of this within the first issue."

in *Infinity Gauntlet* is the premise of what *can* happen, and the individual books will determine exactly what happens to their characters. I do believe, however, that there'll be some changes in the works."

Unfortunately, he can't go into detail about these various changes. "That's really going to have to be answered by the individual creative teams on their books," he states. "I have no control over that—not that I would really want it, anyway. After all, these are their books. I'm just 'borrowing' their characters for this series, which will open up opportunities for change, like *Secret Wars* did."

Starlin was forced to make several changes of his own throughout the limited series as a result of pre-*Gauntlet* events. "I wrote this script several months ago," he explains, "and many things have taken place since then. The Hulk, Thor and Quasar have undergone major changes in their own books recently, so there were revisions to make in our script. Apparently, we've had some more changes since then, but I just can't keep track of *all* of them. I have so many other projects going on, and [the creative teams] have to be able to run their own books.

"What I've done is set the series up in such a way that it went as smoothly as possible. There was a lot of latitude left for how the crossovers would be done. Some crossover series have been very structured in the past, making it very hard for those who wanted to cross over with the series to get stories they wanted to do."

The things a god does for a girl. With the Infinity Gauntlet in hand, Thanos continues his attempts to win the love of Death.

According to Starlin, artist George Perez is having "a great time" drawing *The Infinity Gauntlet*. "It's his chance to draw more characters than he did inside *Crisis on Infinite Earths*."

Another crossover problem for Starlin developed from scheduling changes. "The series was originally going to run bi-weekly for three months, but we had to change it to monthly because of deadline problems. So, there's not going to be a continuous crossover the whole time *Infinity Gauntlet* is going on in most books. Some books may just cut into it for a month or so, while titles like *Dr. Strange* will probably cross over the entire length of the series. I also know that *The Silver Surfer* will be making crossovers throughout the entire six-month run."

Unfortunately, several major Marvel characters will only be making either brief or no appearances in *Infinity Gauntlet*, including a certain band of mutants. Says Starlin, "Right from the beginning, I called up every writer who was working on a series and checked to see if they had any storyline problems that would have made it difficult for these characters to appear. The X-Men were tied up with all sorts of crossovers already, so it was best not to

Warlock Art: Angel Medina

Starlin says resurrecting Warlock was "self-defense." He didn't want anyone else doing it.

All Silver Surfer, Warlock, Infinity Gauntlet Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1991 Marvel Entertainment Group

add them into the line-up, just because it would have made Chris Claremont's continuity impossible." Although the X-Men won't take up the *Gauntlet*, the writer adds that Wolverine *will* appear in the book, giving Starlin an opportunity to work with one of the few characters he has never really written.

In addition to being Marvel's biggest crossover project since the two *Secret Wars* limited series, *Infinity Gauntlet* marks George Perez's first series work for the company in almost a decade. "George is having a great time drawing the book," Starlin says, "because it's literally his chance to draw more characters than he did inside [DC Comics'] *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. On one of his covers, in fact, he beat his personal number as to how many people he can put into *one* illustration."

Although Perez is one of today's most popular comics artists, Starlin fans may wonder why he didn't draw the series himself, in addition to scripting it. After all, Starlin earned his reputation first as an artist throughout the '70s and '80s.

"I just don't do a lot of comic book art any longer," he explains. "It's just my decision. I've been concentrating on many other things right now, such as writing novels. My wife and I had also been writing a screenplay for *Among Madmen*, a novel we came out with last year."

Despite having to put *Silver Surfer* into the hands of writer Ron Marz with issue #51, Starlin will add a new *Adam Warlock* series to his already busy writing schedule. Expected to premiere several weeks after the last issue of *Infinity Gauntlet*, this new series will be drawn by Angel Medina of *Dreadstar* fame.

The author is not quick to discuss his plans for *Adam Warlock* because "so much of what is going to happen in this book is a follow-up to *Infinity Gauntlet*. By giving too much information on *Warlock*, I would be giving away the mini-series' ending.

"*Warlock* is going to be a group book, that much I can tell you. The characters involved in it will be Warlock, Pip, Gamora, Moondragon and Drax." For those who have not been following recent issues of *Silver Surfer*, Starlin warns that Drax, another once-dead character, is *not* the same Destroyer he once was. "Drax was killed by Moondragon's mental blasts," the writer explains, "so he came back from the dead a bit brain-damaged this time. He now has a funny edge."

Why did Starlin decide to resurrect Adam Warlock? "There are many reasons for that," he states. "Other writers had been talking about doing it. Warlock was always one of my favorite characters, and at the time I had killed him off and left Marvel, [then-Editor-in-Chief] Jim Shooter agreed that he would never be touched again. They would just leave him dead. But there was some interest by other people to bring him back, so in some ways, as a self-defense measure, *I* would rather do it. Plus, I like the guy. What can I say?"

Bringing Warlock back to life has also changed Starlin's perception of the character. "In the past, Adam was a suicidal paranoid," he states. "He was a reflection of a lot of where I was at that point. I had a hard time in the

(continued on page 52)

Although Mephisto may be kissing up to Thanos now, it's merely a set-up. "After all, what else is Mephisto going to do?" Starlin asks.

One man killing machine

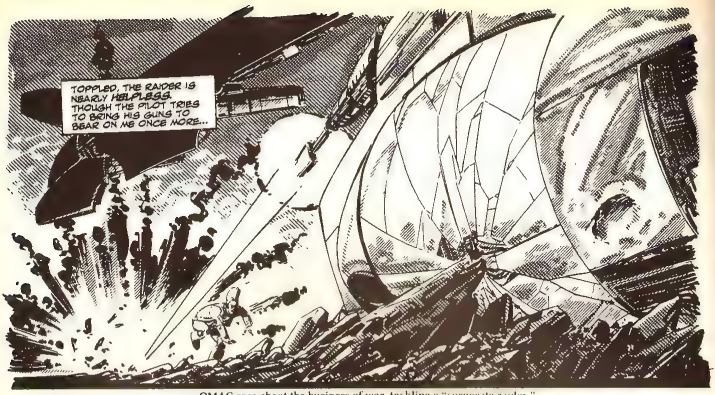
Jack Kirby's OMAC returns in the hands of John Byrne to remake the future as it should be.

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

OMAC is one of my favorite kinds of characters—the warrior-philosopher," says John Byrne of Jack Kirby's Buddy Blank, the One Man Army Corps. Byrne is about to launch a four-issue prestige format mini-series that reintroduces OMAC to DC readers of the '90s.

"He's the kind of guy who goes around ripping people's heads off, almost while quoting Shakespeare," Byrne notes. "He doesn't like the role he has been created for; he doesn't like being, essentially, a killing machine. He's an army corps—and what is an army corps if not a killing machine? He's not a negotiator, a peacemaker. He must go out there and finish the job. But, at the same time, especially with his link with Brother Eye in space, he has access to all the knowledge, all the philosophy, all the beauty in the world...and he lives vicariously, through Brother Eye, that aspect of human existence—being able to tap into the great works of fiction, of art and such. He gets into these tragic little riffs—'Oh, what a horrible world it is. If only it wasn't so horrible...' "

The character had only a six-issue run in his original series, which ended on a cliffhanger as it was cancelled in mid story. Writer/artist Jim Starlin did a brief run with him in the '80s, but he remains one of Kirby's more obscure DC creations, especially as compared to the New Gods, Mr. Miracle or Kamandi. So, the question really is: Why OMAC?



OMAC goes about the business of war, tackling a "corporate raider."

"OMAC had never occurred to me until Jonathan Peterson was shopping around for something to edit and something for me to do," Byrne admits. "I had actually inquired about Kamandi and discovered that, a week before my inquiry, DC had launched another Kamandi project. But that got Jonathan thinking, 'What other old Kirby characters are lying around that I could entice John with?' He came up with OMAC and my first reaction was the same as everybody's '*Why* OMAC?' Then, a story started to come together in my head and I realized there *are* things that *can* be done with OMAC.

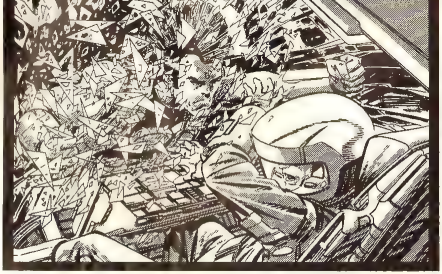
"He's also a character that is, let's say, to one side of the DC Universe," Byrne goes on. "It can be handled without stepping on anybody else's continuity; it's not like plunging into Superman again. My story picks up 20 years after Jack's run on the original series, so I can ignore anything that has happened before—or use anything that happened before, pretty much to my heart's desire."

The mini-series, as Byrne describes it, involves time-travel and a time paradox. "The world that's coming," as Kirby called OMAC's future, is not as readers of that series would remember it. "Everything is blasted and dead, generally the kind of ugly future the fans seem to love these days," Byrne notes. OMAC discovers that all the troubles he and his world have been going through aren't real. This is an *alternate* timeline that was created. OMAC must go back in time and re-create the "real" timeline.

"We discover that the 'real' timeline is the one we saw in Jack's six issues of *OMAC*," Byrne points out. "And the particular OMAC we encounter at the new series' beginning hasn't lived through the world that's coming as described by Jack—electric cities, people getting brain transplants, girl friends in a box—definitely the strangest image *ever* to appear in a Comics Code-approved comic."

So, OMAC goes back in time and finds himself in the 1920s, where he must try to put history right. "That's about as much as I can say without giving away everything," Byrne laughs.

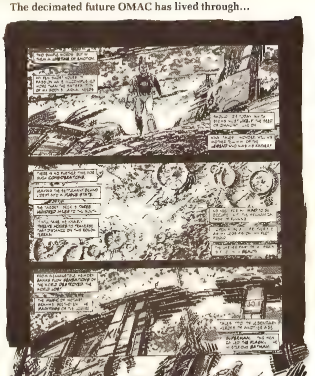
Taking on a character created by Jack Kirby is a special challenge, Byrne says. Just the richness of Kirby's concepts is daunting. "There's more in a single Jack Kirby issue of *any* book than in a year's worth of most other books, especially toward the end of his tenure with the Big Two, when he was doing the *New Gods*, *OMAC*, *Kamandi*. He was throwing away stuff in one panel that I would look at and say, 'I could have gotten *six* issues out of that.' Or more like, 'I would have wasted six issues on that,' and he did it in one panel. I don't want to seem like a fan ghoul, forever preying on Jack, but when you look at a Kirby book, there are so many things that suggest themselves."



All OMAC Art: John Byrne

Deploying the One Man Army Corps once more was something even John Byrne questioned at first.

Which is "the world that's coming"?
The decimated future OMAC has lived through...



...or the gleaming tomorrow that Jack Kirby envisioned?

All OMAC Art & Characters Copyright 1981 DC Comics Inc.

One thing Byrne will *not* be doing is attempting to emulate Kirby's art. "As soon as I sat down to draw this, I said I could spend four 45-page comics basically ripping off Jack or I could just say, 'Jack's technology is based on the way Jack draws; I will do technology based on the way I draw.' It's still the same world, same technology, but I don't draw like Jack so it doesn't look the same."

But Byrne has no illusions about the way in which some circles of fandom will react to his taking on a Kirby character. "Being that 99 percent of the current audience isn't even familiar with OMAC, I don't think it's that much of a challenge. Readers will look at it as something on its own. There won't be any sudden drive to go out and buy back issues of *OMAC* so they'll know where they are. It'll stand on its own and be judged on its own, I think. Certainly there will be those people who, like myself, read the original, and they'll judge it against what Kirby did. I hope I do something that doesn't greatly offend them. I've given up on not offending at all; I now try to keep my offense down to a minimum."

Byrne made his mark as an artist (see CS#1, 5), then turned to writing his own scripts for titles like *Alpha Flight*. He came to mainstream public attention when he revamped Superman in the mid-80s. Does he see himself as primarily an artist or a writer?

"I think I'm a better writer than an artist," he replies, surprisingly. "I've always thought of myself as a writer who draws. I think my dialogue is strong—when I read my old stuff, I'm usually pleased that the dialogue isn't as stiff and stilted as it is in many comics. For the most part, my people tend to talk like real people. My villains tend to get a bit bombastic. That's required of them. The actual execution of the plot is probably my weakest point. Most people complain that my stories just *end* because I don't do what Chris Claremont and I used to on the *X-Men*: Every story was followed by three issues talking about that story. My attitude tends to be: 'That story's over, here's the next one.'

"It's an old-style attitude in comics, unless you have a situation where you should linger over it—somebody dies or a headquarters gets blown up. I don't go quite as far as what Jim Shooter used to say—the ideal subplot is that a hole gets punched in a wall in a fight...and for the next three issues, you see the hole getting repaired in the background. But I don't think we should drag it out much beyond the point at which the story is over."

SOMEONE'S ALWAYS LYING WHEN YOU'RE INVOLVED, BLANK. YOU'VE GOT A PER-SECUTION COMPLEX!
I'M QUITE NOT TRUE, SIR.
HOGWASH! YOU'RE OVERLOADED WITH GIZMOS AND RE-SENTMENTS! I SUGGEST YOU TAKE STEPS TO RID YOURSELF OF THEM!
TO BE CON-TINUED

The four-part Prestige Format mini-series will journey into OMAC's past as Buddy Blank and into actual history, taking readers back to the hero's origin.

But if his writing is stronger than his art, at least in his own opinion, why does he remain primarily a fan favorite for his artistic accomplishments?

"Because *art* sells comics, not story," Byrne maintains. "Whenever I

Trapped in the past, Buddy Blank will soon find himself at the root of his own family tree.

write something I haven't drawn, I always put the artist's name first in the credits. I did it with Paul Ryan on *Avengers*, on *Iron Man* with John Romita Jr. A kid doesn't walk into a comic shop, look across the room, and say, 'Wow! That book looks well written!' Good art can save a bad story, but good writing *cannot* save bad art.

"I think there's an interesting test going on right now of whether readers will stick with a title that has terrific art and bad writing. I've stayed with books for good art, when I thought the stories were kind of lame."

Byrne is also about to return to a scene of past triumphs—and past tribulations. He left the writer/artist post on Marvel's *She-Hulk* after a dispute over editorial control. Now, with a change in editors on the title, new editor Renee Witterstaetter has invited him to return, which he will do as of issue #31.

That request matches what Byrne sees as the paradigm of his career.

"Most of my experience has been with various editors coming to me and saying, for example, 'Would you like to do Sub-Mariner?' 'Oh, boy—yes!' In fact, the major appeal of Sub-Mariner was that it *didn't* have to be revamped very much," he says. "I know that editors come to me because I'm a proven package. I don't think anybody has ever been surprised by anything I've done. [Editor] Howard Mackie came to me to see if I would be interested in *Iron Man*, because he knew exactly what kind of an Iron Man he would get—and that was the kind of Iron Man he wanted. The same was true when [editor] Terry Kavanagh approached me to do Namor [which Byrne discussed in CS #12]; he knew what kind of a Namor he would get. Jonathan was shopping around for a project that he thought my particular approach would fit. I was looking for this kind of 'off-to-one-side' project, so I wouldn't have to worry about being perceived as 'Mr. Fix-It,' which I'm getting tired of."

"Getting tired"—a dangerous phrase among comics pros, often a sign that the individual in question is becoming dissatisfied with comics as a medium of expression. John Byrne says that's not true of him. "I hope writing and drawing comics is *not* what I do exclusively for the rest of my life, but certainly I see myself as having a finger in the pie for as long as I can do it. I hope that when I can't do it anymore I have sufficient wits about me to recognize that. I would hate to turn into a caricature of myself, as has happened to so many before me."

WRITING THE ROCKETEER

Filing a successful flight plan for the airborne hero took five years of rewrites.

By MARC SHAPIRO

More slang! Less slang! Make Cliff more heroic! No! He's too heroic!' We were going crazy trying to figure out what everybody wanted. It was maddening."

But, madness, as described by writer Paul De Meo and as experienced by himself and writing partner Danny Bilson, was giving everybody what they wanted in the final shooting script of *The Rocketeer*. That same insanity also saw the pair go through five years of rewrites and a total of *eight* script drafts. Adding insult to injury was the fact that they were bounced from the project on three different occasions.

"It was definitely a *long* road," agrees De Meo. "And even when we were on the project, it was crazy. The studio or director would pull back on ones they had originally thrown out. Danny and I would end up going back to drafts that were three years old and pulling things back in based on notes as we'd go from different people.

"It was a headache and it was frustrating. But we were always in love with the project and we knew that if *The Rocketeer* was ever going to be made, it was going to be *our* script."

Bilson and De Meo's promise to themselves ultimately came to pass as *The Rocketeer*, currently in post-production for a June release, will hit the screen with their names on it. However, the duo are far too busy to stand still for plaudits. The co-producers of *The Flash* (which they discussed in COMICS SCENE #16) are creatively attempting to keep their red-suited stepchild alive in a time slot that both agree is deadly. They're also awaiting the decision on whether *The Phantom Target* starring Rick Springfield, will make TV's fall schedule. But amidst the chaos, they're still able to take a few moments to backtrack their involvement in *The* [illegible] Mast[illegible] to motion picture screen.

Bilson and De Meo are real fans of the pre-WWII period in which *The Rocketeer* lives. Consequently, they found Dave Stevens' homage to the good old days much to their liking.

"Paul and I saw the potential for *The Rocketeer* as a movie as early as 1984, when we saw a Rocketeer poster in a Los Angeles comic book shop," relates Bilson. "As soon as we saw that, we said, 'That's *great*!' That should be a movie! But then, we read the *Rocketeer* books and said, 'This story's no movie.'"

Dave Stevens (CS #19) was beginning to think the same thing. His option with filmmaker Steve (*House*) Miner was running down to its final days and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

"We jumped at the chance," says Bilson. "We felt we could do a really great version of the comic if given the chance."

The trio met. Bilson and De Meo screened *Zone Troopers* and captivated Stevens with its '40s flavor. They found they shared similar tastes in "period stuff" and that they liked things "honest."

"I don't think we really disagreed on anything at that meeting," De Meo recalls. "We bounced ideas off each other and basically agreed that we wanted to come up with a story that would be the best possible film take on *The Rocketeer*."

Many copies of *The Rocketeer* was at hand would have a winning that day. One minor obstacle remained. "We didn't have the money to option it," says Bilson. "But Dave liked our work and ideas so much that he gave us the option for free."

Bilson and De Meo spent the better part of 1985 putting together a treatment and script and attempting to interest studios in a planned $8 million version of *The Rocketeer* to be directed by Bilson. Those early drafts, pounded out in tandem at a word processor with two monitors, found the writers facing a stumbling block much akin to the baseball phrase, "good field, no hit."

"The biggest problem in translating the comic to film was that, at that point, the Rocketeer only existed in those two comics and there really *wasn't* enough in them to fill out a movie the way we felt the movie should work," explains De Meo.

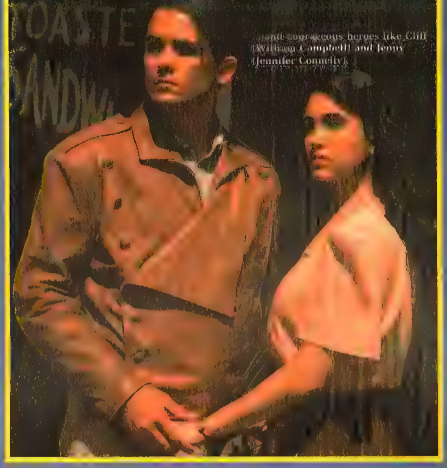
"What we did was add things like histories and back stories, all with Dave's approval, and basically filled out the bare bones of a good story that would translate to film."

"We had to find a story that worked as a movie," Bilson agrees. "The comics weren't so much a movie story as they were an atmosphere. We had to come up with a story, a bad guy, a love interest. And, in the process of writing, we went off on many things. We really exploited the idea of Howard Hughes. We felt he would be cool as the inventor of the rocket pack."

Bilson continues, "The characters needed a lot of work. We didn't think Cliff should be as much of a schmuck as he is in the comics. He still has his problems in the film, but we've fleshed him out. We basically found all the characters needed more color and depth. We gave Peevy more to do and Malcolm is now more than just an old drunk. Betty (a.k.a. Jenny in the film) needed tons of work. We didn't feel her character in the comics was appropriate for film, especially a Disney movie. She's still sexy, but a lot less she's posing for lurid photos."

The screenwriting team's plans to do *The Rocketeer* themselves lasted only a year, when director Joe Dante of *The Rocketeer* fame discovered *The Rocketeer* and wanted to get involved in the film.

bers Bilson, "and Bill said, 'If I direct the film, we can make a $28 million movie because I'm working with fifteen writers.' That appealed to Dave, and I thought, 'I can't stand in the way of a bigger budget,' and so we agreed to scrap the script and Bill would direct. We started working on a



and courageous heroes like Cliff (William Campbell) and Jenny (Jennifer Connelly).

All Rocketeer Photos: Ron Batdorff/Copyright 1991 The Walt Disney Company

Then, there's the Errol Flynnesque actor (Timothy Dalton) to add a few movie-within-a-movie thrills.

script with Bill and the project ultimately sold at Disney."

But not without a little tension. As the writing with Dear progressed, it became evident that Dear wanted a different story.

"When we finished, it turned out to be Bill's story and *not* the one we wanted," Bilson says, "but when Disney rejected it, we had the opportunity to go back to our original script and story, which Disney accepted."

Bilson and De Meo, at a point in pre-production, were called away on another project and weren't available to work on the many script polishes being requested. Dear, recalls De Meo, began revising *The Rocketeer* script.

"When Bill started writing, he decided he wanted to change the last two-thirds of the movie totally around.

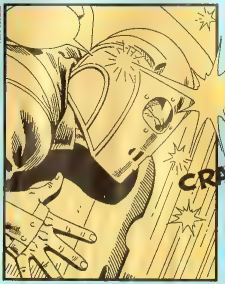
He moved the nightclub scene to the movie's climax, the zeppelin sequence was taken out, and he added a big second act action scene that involved the Rocketeer and an experimental plane. He added another major character, Sinclair's valet Ernst, and while not affecting the story much, it did change the action sequences considerably."

Dear eventually left the project (for more details on his involvement, see CS #2). Bilson and De Meo returned to *The Rocketeer* but were removed from the project for the first of three times. They ultimately convinced Disney to let them return and write a completely new draft of the script. But as other writers came and went and Bilson and De Meo were once again off and on and off the project, the aggravation became a bit too much to bear.

"What we went through was frustration, anger and, finally, total helplessness," says De Meo. "When you feel like you've done really good work and it's not being responded to in the way you would like it to be, it can be very depressing. We always felt we were the right guys for the job and that we had earned the right to do it. Fortunately,

(continued on page 52)

"We knew if *The Rocketeer* was ever going to be made," says Paul De Meo, "it was going to be *our* script."



Art: Russ Heath

Rocketeer Art: Copyright 1991 Disney Comics

Bilson & De Meo Photos: Copyright 1991 Warner Bros. TV

"We felt we could do a really great version of the comic," says Danny Bilson, "if given the chance."

Introduction to JUSTICE SOCIETY

Explore the forgotten years of the world's first super-team—the Justice Society of America.

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

Art: Mike Parobeck & Rick Burchett

I hate to wax philosophical about comics because, jeez, they're only comics after all—but all creative media have lives of their own. You can see that if you look at the success of TV series revivals. When viewers or readers get into certain characters, those characters are alive in their imaginations. Even if the characters aren't being published or seen on TV, in the back of the audience's creative imagination, they're thinking, 'I wonder what that guy is doing now?'

"As part of the whole continuity of the creative media," says writer Len Strazewski, "these characters *are* alive. I think people who read comics ask those things: 'What was the original Flash doing in the '50s? Was he married? Was he having kids?' There's a resonance there; people like to touch base with these characters."

That's how Strazewski explains the continuing interest in DC's heroes of the 1940s and '50s—the Justice Society of America. Now, he's answering some of those questions with an eight-issue mini-series exploring what was probably the JSA's biggest case of 1950—a case never before revealed to fans.

The mini-series focuses on a different JSA member or pair of members in each issue, until the big wrap-up in the last two issues. The first issue, published in February, featured the original Flash (Jay Garrick) in a story drawn by Rick (*Blackhawk*) Burchett. The second issue stars the first Black Canary, with art by Grant Miehm. Issue #3 has Green Lantern (Alan Scott) in the lead, illustrated by Mike Parobeck and Burchett. The fourth issue will ring in the Golden Age Hawkman (Carter Hall) with art by Tom Artis. Number five teams Flash and Hawkman, with Parobeck and Burchett

HEY, ROCCO, GET OUT OF THE ROAD AND GIVE US A HAND!
LIKE, I JUST A MOVIE, MAN!
UHHH! IT'S HEAVY!
WE AIN'T GOT A MOVIE THE COPPLE IS HERE SOON
CRUNCH!
YOW!
OW! MY FOOT!
MY HAIR!
NAH, THE BIG BOY IS OVER DOWNTOWN! WE GOT TIME TO BURN!
BLACK CANARY!
HEY! NO ONE MUSSES MY HAIR!

All Justice Society Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1991 DC Comics Inc. Art: Grant Miehm

returning to the art chores, while #6 pairs Green Lantern and Black Canary with art by Artis. The full team assembles in #7 and #8, with art again by Miehm and Burchett.

And the villain is—Vandal Savage.

Comics readers have seen a great deal of that immortal Cro-Magnon in the past few years: He was a recurring threat in *Flash* and the secret power behind the Illuminati in the *Time Masters* miniseries. "I don't think I would use Vandal Savage again. Anything I have to say about him will be said in this series." Strazewski admits, while arguing, "Vandal Savage is a wonderfully compelling character—he's immortal, he's about as reactionary as a character can get, he's extremely powerful. He has enough complexity as a character to be used over and over again. No one is arguing that Lex Luthor is an over-used villain. I don't think Vandal is quite at that stage—but I think he's very fertile, an interestingly conceived character, and people have been developing new depths with him. Mike Baron and Bill Loebs have developed the Vandal Savage character very well in the *Flash* series. And some of that I'm retrograding into his character in the '50s."

Strazewski is a native Chicagoan and still lives there. After gaining a bachelor's degree in journalism, a master's in creative writing, and a second master's in industrial relations, he decided to turn his spare time (he's a full-time business journalist) to his earliest love: comics.

"My first published comics work was

"The '50s are not known as an era of women's lib," notes Len Strazewski, "but here's Black Canary, the only female member of the JSA, kicking butt on some juvenile delinquents."

in a benefit book for Literacy Volunteers of Chicago, called *Quest for Dreams Lost*," he recalls. "It was conceived by Brian Augustyn, when he was here in Chicago. Then when Brian was editing *Trollords*, he brought me in to kibbitz, to sit around and brainstorm with the creators. So, I wound up contributing to the *Trollords Special*.

"I learned to read from comics," Strazewski continues. "I can't remember reading things and *not* having comics handy. My mom would buy comics when I was three or four years old and use them to get me to read. I became interested in creating comics when I was hanging around on the southwest side with a rough crowd, among whom was Brian Augustyn. One of the neat things about doing comics now is working with Brian. When I did a *Flash* fill-in about a year ago, we spent a couple of hours on the phone discussing whether Wally West is fast enough to run on water or up the side of a building. We realized we had had that conversation in my basement when we were 11. Now, we're getting paid for it."

Strazewski's first published work for DC Comics was a series featuring a new version of a 1940s character, the Phantom Lady, in *Action Comics Weekly*.

"The Phantom Lady was a fluke; it wasn't the result of a proposal," he says. "*Action Weekly* was in progress, and they were looking for a female character to replace Black Canary. Brian and Mark Waid called me and rattled off a few possibilities for updating. I called back about 45 minutes later with the origin of the new Phantom Lady. That triggered my interest in thinking about what was good about the Golden Age characters and what might be used for drawing on their tradition for more modern characters. I still think the Phantom Lady is a neat character and I want to do more with her in the future."

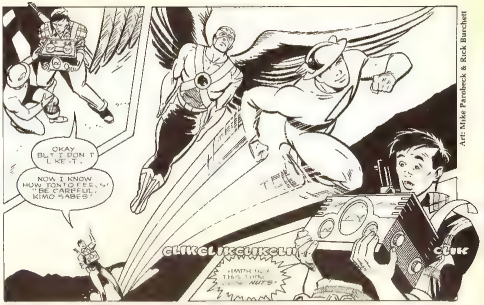
His renewed interest in the heroes of 40 years past was further spurred by a subsequent assignment—writing the Jay Garrick segment of the 50th anniversary issue of *Flash*.

"As I thought about that period—the spy mentality of the late '40s, J. Edgar Hoover and the beginnings of the Communist witch hunt—I really got into it," Strazewski notes. "There were many neat things about it: There was a strange moral ambiguity being developed, a whole new kind of society—the rise of the common man in the post-war era. This is really fertile territory. Roy Thomas has done a lot with the JSA and the All-Star Squadron in World War II, but no one had taken the JSA into the next few years before they disappeared."

Strazewski took his newfound interest and questions to DC's editorial staff. "'What's going on with the Justice Society circa 1950? Are those characters available? Do you want to see a proposal?' I asked. Brian bounced those questions off Mike Gold and he said they should still be active—'Give us a proposal.' It came at a propitious time, because a number of very good, very suitable artists were available."

The last time DC tried a "period piece" was with the most recent version of *Blackhawk*, covering nearly the same time period as Strazewski's *Justice Society* series. *Blackhawk* didn't survive two years—is Strazewski worried that the great mass of comic-book readers just isn't interested in the events of 40 years ago?

"It depends on how you're defining the 'great mass of comic-book readers,'" he counters. "I would be surprised


OKAY, SO I GUESS I'LL BE IT.
NOW I KNOW HOW TONY FELT—"BE CAREFUL, SCWOOBABES!"
CLIKKLIKKLIKK!!
CLUNK
HAVE TO TELL THEM APART!
Art: Mike Parobeck & Rick Burchett

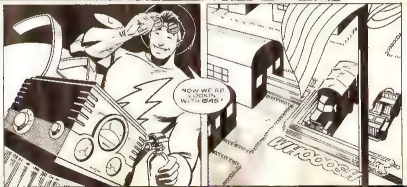
As with their Golden Age adventures, the Justice Society won't be seen all together until the mini-series' end, although a few, like Hawkman and the Flash, will pair off before then.

interested in a period piece for it to sell; to be successful, it doesn't have to sell 400,000 copies. While I'm not saying I would mind it, or the stories aren't good enough to attract the broad base of comics readers, if I can make 100,000 comics readers happy, that's fine.

"This is an eight-part mini-series; it's *not* meant to be a continuing series,' at least not as I've conceived it," he goes

"The Golden Age Flash is one of my favorites," Strazewski confesses.

if *Justice Society* outsold *X-Men*; I don't think that's going to happen. But there are many comics being published, and lots of different kinds of comic readers out there. Comic readers are everybody from kids four and five years old to—gosh, I'm 35 and I buy a lot of comics. I know plenty of older people who buy a lot of comics. The massive comic-book audience doesn't have to be



THIS FILM, DELIVERED JUST MINUTES AGO BY SATELLITE, SHOWS THE ILL-FATED ROCKET SHIP'S CREW FIGHTING AGAINST A STRANGE, GIANT CREATURE.
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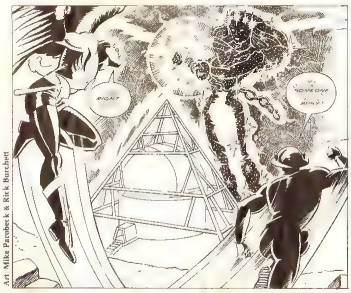
I AM IS WINNING!
I TOLD YOU BEAST YOU.
BEATEN ME? HARDLY. THE GAME HAS JUST BEGUN! AN ARRANGE FOR AN ARMY AND A FLEET TO ME! I'VE BEEN THE R ERRAND'S
SIR.
AM THAT'S A BETTER ATTITUDE NOW, BOTHER SAY! WHO CARES ABOUT YOUR ASSIGNMENTS?

Art: Rick Burchett



Art: Mike Parobeck & Rick Burchett

While Vandal Savage menaces the rest of the Justice Society with his stellar creations, Solomon Grundy terrorizes Ted Knight, the original Starman.

"What's going on with the Justice Society circa 1950?" wondered the writer. "No one had taken them into the next few years before they had disappeared."

on. "Does it have to appeal to the mass audience? Sure, to some extent—but it's a *limited* series. This is a showcase kind of feature that people buy to check into these characters. Unlike *Blackhawk*, it doesn't have to sustain readership for a long time."

Justice Society, as much as he enjoys it, isn't the end of Strazewski's comics commitments. He is now the regular writer of *Starman*. "Roger Stern brought Starman up to the point that the character was just starting to cope with the fact that—although he was no longer physically human—he still had his humanity to deal with. Stern was playing with the definitions of humanity. Now, I'm moving him into a new level of development, as he discovers what being a hero is about—how to expand beyond just beating up bad guys.

"There are two new projects that I just got a go-ahead on, involving characters licensed from the old Archie Adventure line," Strazewski hints. "That hasn't been announced yet, so the details are still a little hazy. And I'm waiting for the final contract on a 12-issue series combining my interests in journalism and technology with a good science-fiction adventure."

With *Justice Society*, Strazewski is getting the chance to try his hand at scripting some of the archetypes of comics: Flash, the prototype super-fast man; Green Lantern, the all-powerful do-anything character; Hawkman, the epitome of flight. And his favorite?

"I really like doing them all—which sounds like a cop-out answer," he laughs. "The Golden Age Flash is one of my favorites. I'm also enjoying Black Canary a lot," Strazewski admits. "The '50s are not known as an era of women's lib, but here's Black Canary, the only female member of the JSA, hanging out with the guys, kicking butt on some juvenile delinquents. She's a precursor of the women's lib movement—and still sexy as all get-out. And Green Lantern—Alan Scott—is great. I've always wanted to write a Green Lantern. I've always thought there was something about Green Lantern that people overlooked. I was talking about this with Mike Parobeck, who drew the GL issue, and we tried to rationalize what this character is about. 'All right, Mike, let's look at this: You're a guy and at the end of your arm is something that allows you to basically create *anything* your imagination comes up with. You can reach out, visualize something in your mind, focus your will power, and you can make that happen. What does that remind you of?'

"I heard the little wheels turning in Mike's brain and he answered, 'Are you trying to tell me that Green Lantern is a comics artist?' That was *exactly* what I was trying to say—Green Lantern is the ultimate metaphor for comics creation," Len Strazewski says. "He has the miraculous ability to make everything in his imagination happen."

INSIDE CAGES

by KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Dave McKean

Photo: David Hutchison

Dave McKean comics question what he believes art shouldn't answer.

Dave McKean may have escaped from *Arkham Asylum*, but he has managed to get himself caught up in a different set of *Cages*. This time around, though, the acclaimed illustrator has dusted off his typewriter, and is also scripting the new 10-issue series for Tundra.

The philosophy of *Cages* has its creator quite excited, but he admits that the series itself is difficult to describe.

"Very generally, it's about why people believe in things," McKean explains, "and belief systems in general—the things people take on board to get them through life.

"*Cages* came out of visual ideas," he adds. "I had been drawing a lot, so story ideas came very slow. It has taken three years, while I've been working on other peoples' books—jottings and little bits of plot ideas that I had written down, which came together at a time when I was completely unhappy with everything that I had done. I was generally dissatisfied with

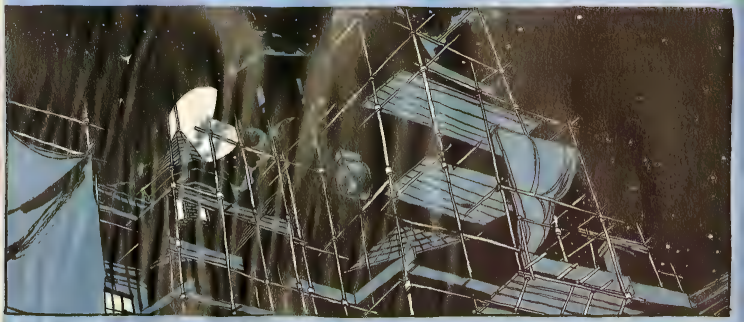
everything and wanted to re-create what I was doing, which led into the creation myth at the beginning."

McKean explains that his more mainstream comics work had begun to frustrate him. "Midway through *Black Orchid*, and mostly with *Arkham*, I started feeling that it wasn't quite right. I was doing them for the fun of it, not for any sort of personal satisfaction. Then, I got to the stage where I realized I hadn't done *anything* for personal satisfaction!"

Cages was the project McKean decided to do for himself. "It follows the interweaving lives of a bunch of people who live in the same building. There are fantasy elements that weave through it, but what I'm trying to set up in the beginning is a down-to-earth, simple story about these people. Running alongside that are mythic folk tales full of surreal and fantasy images, but they don't touch. They run *parallel* to each other. The story with all the mundane, everyday goings-on is in the *context* of this strange world and the fantasy images, which is largely how I think many people go on [about life]. People run around doing many day-to-day mundane things: going to work, coming back, eating, sleeping... in the context of believing in God or gods, these fabulous stories of centuries-gone-by. It's interesting that their lives can be seen in that way.

"There are moments in my story when the mundane and the mythic come together," he continues, "but I'm generally trying to keep them apart, because that's mostly what happens [in real life]. At the day's end, people don't get to talk to God, and there are no immense, miraculous, fantastical things that happen. But, at the same time, there are many small miracles

All the characters' *Cages* can be found under the same roof somewhere in the heart of a large English city.



"It's basically simple little stories that will be seen in a bigger context," he says.

All Art Courtesy Tundra Publishing

TI Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1991 Dave McKean

and happenstances, tiny bits of luck and synchronicity, that pile on top of one another and can be seen in a magical sense. I wanted to come up with something that would reflect that.

"Most of all, I don't want to be heavy-handed with it, and produce some cold, philosophical treatise. *Cages* isn't that. I want it to be very light and funny. There are simple, basic stories at its center. One of them is about an artist who falls in love. another is about a writer who manages to escape the life that he has found himself trapped in. It's basically simple little stories that will hopefully be seen in a bigger context."

Despite its philosophical underpinnings, McKean says *Cages* should be accessible to the average comics reader.

"I'm hoping that it's easy enough to follow. It's very, very simple storytelling. I'm hoping that people will get interested in the characters themselves, and that there'll be just enough simple, odd questions and happenings to keep readers interested in the day-to-day things. I'm hoping people will be satisfied in the end, but without having all of their questions answered, because I don't think that's its function. That's not what life—and art—are about. Art should raise questions, not answer them."

The writer/artist is also hopeful that *Cages* will attract new readers from outside the comics realm, as well as longtime comics fans. "I don't mind who reads it," he says. "I'll take anybody and everybody! I'm hoping that since the storytelling is so clear, that regular comics fans will be

All Art: Dave McKean

drawn into it. Since it has no genre trappings, and it's not a superhero comic, I'm also hoping that somebody who doesn't normally read comics can read it as they might go to a movie."

McKean emphasizes that comics *must* progress beyond the "For Kids Only" image if the form hopes to survive. "I think comics are basically dead if they don't. If they just decide to produce work to satisfy the audience, not only will the work *never* improve, but that audience will also get bored with it. The audience will get older and more demanding, and finally go away. I don't just mean adult stuff. I mean good children's comics and comics for women. Unless you start attracting *everybody*, then comics are dead. The same is true for every medium."

After finishing *Arkham Asylum*, McKean doesn't want to get any closer to mainstream comics characters. "I would *never* want to do a mainstream character. I don't really know what the definition of 'mainstream' is. If Mr. X is a mainstream character, I think he has a great potential that has never been tapped. But if it's something like Batman, then no, no way. Apart from the fact that I've never really been interested, I don't think I could do 24 pages a month and keep any quality there that would satisfy anybody.

"As far as it goes," the artist admits, "I was as happy with how *Arkham Asylum* turned out as I could be. But you must realize that at the end of the day, I've piled all these painted images and textures and all kinds of illusions on top of a *Batman* comic, and the foundations aren't strong enough. *Who cares* whether Batman's a psychopath or not? I mean, it does no good to know that. *Who* gives a damn? There's just not enough content there to withstand all of that stuff piled on top. When you realize that, you don't care how pretty the pictures are. You realize that the book has no foundation, and it flounders on that."

According to McKean, there are natural frustrations to being an artist that simply added to those he felt on *Arkham*. "If you're working toward your ideal and it never comes out right, that's completely different from someone else saying, 'Do this piece of work for us.' You realize the restrictions imposed on you before even putting pen to paper. The mere fact that it was a *Batman* comic was one hell of a restriction, because I just *didn't* want to draw Batman. It's very difficult to do a *Batman* comic without drawing him in there. Someone's going to notice!"

Comics fans can still see McKean's work on the covers of *Sandman* and *Miracleman*. Now that he has been doing them for a while, the artist says that he no longer receives any guidelines for his paintings.

(continued on page 44)

INSIDE
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...In COMICS SCENE #18, you did a *Wild Cards* article which featured some of my covers for the Bantam/Spectra paperback series. The copyright/trademark notice at the beginning of the article stated, in effect, that my cover illustrations are copyrighted (and the representations therein owned by) Bantam Books and The Wild Cards Corporation. This is an error. Copyright to the art is my name, and the particular representations of and designs for the characters depicted on those covers are mine. When Epic did the comics versions of the books, character representations as depicted on the paperback covers could not be used...at least not without my consent. And Bantam (or the Wild Cards Corp.) only leased first-printing options on those covers.

Perhaps comics companies could learn something from major book publishers?
Timothy Truman
Pennsylvania

...I've just read the editorial (CS #17) by David McDonnell, "Weather Report," and would like to add my two bits.

I know exactly how he feels about today's comics. In fact, I can give you the exact date things changed for me. It was during the DC *Crisis on Infinite Earths* series. It was the day the Flash died.

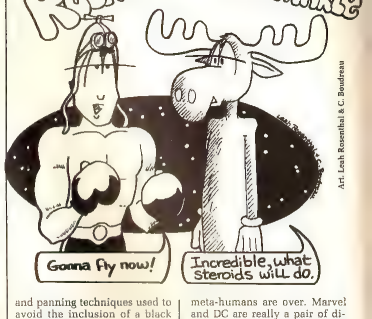
I've read comics for almost as long as I can remember. It started with Richie Rich, Casper, Sad Sack. Then, I discovered superheroes. *The Flash* was the first superhero comic I ever read. The cover was gone and a few pages were missing, but I was hooked. A few years later (1972 to be exact), I started collecting comics. For the next 14 years, I followed the exploits of the JLA and its members. There were hints along the way that the end was coming. *The Brave & the Bold* was cancelled. The JLA disbanded and reorganized into that mutant group (fortunately, that didn't last long). Even Supergirl's death did not bother me as much as when I saw Barry Allen die. Things had gone full circle, my beginning had come to an end.

I continued to buy comics, but the spark was not there. The *Crisis* had made too many changes (Everything that happened in the last 50 years...forget it...never happened). My favorite comic, *JLA*, had become a bunch of bumbling idiots who hardly ever battled a crook. Superman had been revamped, Batman was becoming more and more of a psychopath and the Flash had been replaced with a whiny, snot-nosed kid.

I will admit there have been some good moments in the last few years and comics are "looking" better, but they just aren't fun or exciting anymore. So, a few months ago, I stopped buying comics, I quit. I thought it might be hard to say goodbye to characters who had become friends over the last 18 years, but they really weren't the same people I knew. I do still buy the *JLI* series. Even though they are a pale comparison of what the JLA was, I enjoy the series. (Yet what I wouldn't give to see "Earth's Mightiest Heroes" together again.)

I'll continue to buy COMICS SCENE and thumb through a comic now and then to keep up on what's happening, but I must agree with Editor McDonnell when he says that the thunder is gone and no matter how many times I say, "SHAZAM!", I don't think it will come back.
Ron Baseler
Omaha, NE

...I saw your article on *Fantasia*'s restoration in CS #16. Recently, we attended a lecture/slide/film show at Webster University by visiting animator/historian John Canemaker. He indicated that at the time, *Fantasia* was envisioned as a traveling collection of animation pieces that would change regularly. He also showed planned sequences that were never fully realized. I asked him afterwards about the Pastoral cuts for stereotyping. He indicated that these weren't cuts, but zooming and panning techniques used to avoid the inclusion of a black centaurette, who was waiting upon the other females.
Craig Andrews
1705 Redbird Cove
Brentwood, MO 63144



Art: Leah Rosenthal & C. Boudreau

...I've just read COMICS SCENE #17. It was really good. I liked the Chris Claremont section about the X-Men's future. One thing still puzzles me, though: Are Dazzler, Rogue and Longshot going to come back to the X-Men? I know Rogue is with Magneto and Dazzler is having a good career in show business but I have *no* idea what Longshot is doing. I would also like to know where I can order *Omaha the Cat Dancer* comics from. Is there any chance I can get back issues?
Otis Tucker
1315 Redwood Lane
Pickering, Ontario
Canada L1X 1C4

Stay tuned for the latest in mutant news shortly. Kitchen Sink's comics and books are available at your local comics store—or by catalog from Kitchen Sink Press, No. 2 Swamp Road, Princeton, WI 54968.

...I enjoy your coverage of the independent comic companies; I feel the day of Mutants and meta-humans are over. Marvel and DC are really a pair of dinosaurs. I would like to see more stories on First, Eclipse and Caliber Press comics. *Omaha the Cat Dancer* and *Grimjack* are two of my favorites. Sadly, there are no comic stores in my area, so it's hard for me to get copies of my favorite independents.

On another subject, how about coverage of censorship in comics? Believe me, censorship exists. I'm from North Carolina, I know about it.
David Webb
P.O. Box 565
Washington, NC 27889

...In your interview with the *Tiny Toons* directing animators, CS #17, one of them stated that Disney people were shocked when they saw *Tiny Toons*. Then, he lamely concluded that they were ashamed because Warner Bros. had surpassed their animation quality. Get real! I read somewhere that *Tiny Toon Adventures* cost $25 million to make. For this? I was shocked.

I, always anxious to see something new and inventive, saw the first week of *Tiny Toon Adventures*. The animation is bright and colorful, but, in my opinion, not quite up to par with Disney's. The stories are simple and when they concentrate too

hard on being funny, they get kind of boring. The characters are interesting, but their personalities are an exact counterpart to their classic cartoon ancestors. They aren't half as entertaining nor as imaginative as Disney's cartoons. Even the *Ninja Turtles* cartoons are more fun to watch (Supreme insult.) The only things that impressed me were the voices and the music. But overall, I was *very* disappointed.

Sorry, *Tiny Toons* people, but, until something equal comes along, this animation lover's only after-school cartoons will be Disney's.

Laura Martinez
P.O. Box 8000
Brownsville, TX 78526

...I've been greatly pleased with the array of subjects and articles that you've been placing in your magazine of late. The coverage of the new series of books that Marvel has released in recent months was extremely well done. Your articles on *Ghost Rider* and *Guardians of the Galaxy* were very informative and of great scope as far as telling us what the creators themselves think and how they interpret the characters.

Also, the interviews of the stars who make comics what they are today (I speak of Chris Claremont, Frank Miller, Alan Grant and so on) were very enjoyable. But please, could you try to show a photo of them with the story? While we may recognize their artistic or literary styles, we may not generally recognize their faces.

With your indulgence, I would like to make a few comments on the subject of comics to film.

Adapting a medium like comics to film is a massive undertaking, no matter what the title or character or theme of the film. Just being able to have the ability to create skillful effects to bring a comic character to life is a magnificent achievement. The hard hours and grueling work it takes to make films like these is bad enough without having people sneer or ridicule or create negative critique over them, thus destroying all the effort that the crews put into them. I'm as die hard a comic fan as one can be, but I also realize that *no film* is going to be 100% exactly like the comic, *ever!* I can accept the origin being slightly different or the costume or makeup not precise, and even the character being somewhat statured differently.

I accept the film in front of my eyes for what it is, and then, I make my own judgment as to whether I liked it or not.

Mark R. Daniels
612 Arlington Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45215

...I would like to reply to Shaw Izikon's letter in CS #17. First of all, S4 for COMICS SCENE SPECTACULAR is, in my opinion, quite reasonable. It's true that there are only a few articles in it, but what about the posters? Keeping the price as low as possible until they are forced to print two pictures on both sides of the paper is quite a feat in this day and age.

As for the annual increase of comic prices, well, we can't do anything about that. The publishers are not keen on doing it either (believe me, they aren't) but inflation forces them to. As a result, we see many advertisements printed to keep the price as low as possible.

Your suggestions on how to reduce prices are interesting, Shaw, but I don't think reducing the size of the comic book is a good one. They're already small as it is. And I don't think publishing on cheaper paper is good, either. The paper they're using now is the cheapest. The publishers could use recycled paper but why they haven't, I don't know.

It's a pity you don't buy comics that are more than $2 because you're missing a lot of fun. However, if you think you have problems, why don't you get in my shoes? The currency exchange rate between American dollars and Malaysian ringgit is 2.7, so we have to pay 12 ringgit for a copy of COMICS SCENE! Count yourself lucky!

Khairul Hezry
No. 1, Jalan 20/4
Paramount Garden
46300 Petaling Jaya
Selangor, Malaysia

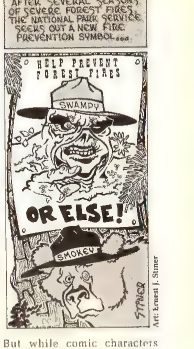
...I would like a little information about one of my favorite magazines, *Heavy Metal*. Is this title dead or what? I never see it here or in any ad. So, what gives?

In COMICS SCENE, I rarely find coverage of underground comics. The term "underground" itself is very insulting. These kind of comics often have good writing and excellent drawing. Comics are an art, I don't see any comics as dirty. If there are comics that are used to arouse people in a sexual way, I don't think it's dirty. The writer/artist manages to do this just like a movie. I don't see *Total Recall* being called a dirty movie. So, why doesn't a magazine like this break the term underground?

L.A. Wardana
Indonesia

Heavy Metal *is still being published, but as a quarterly.*

...I've seen STARLOG's articles on costumes and costuming.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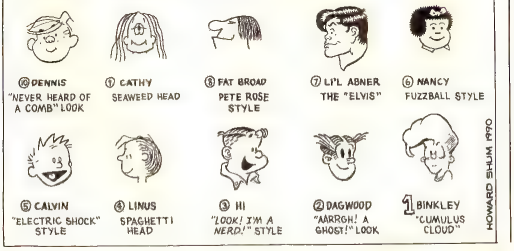
But while comic characters have appeared in these features, they have never been the focus. Perhaps COMICS SCENE would do a feature spotlighting fan versions of comic heroes?

While I'm suggesting ideas, I think a fun idea for a recurring feature might be "Hero Update," a section spotlighting a character who seems to have dropped out of sight. It could mention his or her last known appearance and speculate on what might be done with him should he/her return. I would say that a very good prospect for the first installment of said feature would have to be the original Captain Marvel. It has been almost two years since DC promised us a new Cap series, and I think most fans would like to know what's going on. With all the commentary about the need for lighter, more fun comics, Cap's absence becomes inexplicable. Add to this the fact we are currently in the year of the Big Red Cheese's 50th anniversary, and his absence now becomes *inexcusable*. Now really, I don't want to presume to tell Keith Giffen and J.M. DeMatteis how to write *Justice League*, but I have to ask what they mean by bringing two New Gods into the book when we've been waiting since *JL* #7 for the return of Captain Marvel! Ah well, I'll keep my eye on the "Comics Screen" page. With the spate of comic projects that are actually making it to film, I keep up every hope that "The World's Mightiest Mortal's" turn is soon to come.

Mike Acord
4721 Walden Circle #123
Orlando, FL 32811



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THE WIZARD OF OOZE

By KYLE COUNTS

All Turtles II Photos: John Bramley © copyright 1990 Northshore Investments Ltd.

Michael Pressman helms the Turtles' latest wide-screen adventure. Is there still gold in them thar shells?

Michael Pressman is under the gun. In little more than four weeks, the director is scheduled to hand in his cut of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Secret of the Ooze* (now in theaters). But on this chilly Southern California afternoon, he is looping (recording the actors' vocals) on a stage at Skywalker Sound in West Los Angeles, yet another in a series of marathon days.

"I'm gone," Pressman sighs, plopping down in a chair in the recording facility's tiny lounge. "I've been working six-day weeks since July. I'm up at six and looping by eight in the morning, going until 7 p.m. The last couple of weeks I've been so exhausted, I've just been going home and crashing. Yesterday I had an extra 15 minutes [between appointments], and as I walked to my car, I noticed how beautiful it was outside, and I thought, 'Gee, just four more weeks and I'll be out of prison.' "

That's not to say Pressman isn't enjoying his latest stint behind the camera—he's delighted to be working in features again after doing nearly seven years' worth of TV movies. Rather, it speaks to the compressed time frame he has been given to turn out the second wide-screen Ninja Turtles adventure. When you're as hot as Mirage Studios' Renaissance reptiles—the first Turtles romp from New Line Cinema surprised everyone by pulling in an astounding $134 million at the box office—there isn't time to rest on one's laurels.

"From the point of writing a screenplay to completing a film, it takes a year's worth of work," says Pressman. "Here, you've got a very specialized movie with a lot of FX, looping, creatures and action. It took three months to write the script, four months for preproduction, two months for shooting—53 days, to be exact—and then three months for editing and looping. That's it. We can't be a day late. We're doing the dubbing in two shifts, on two stages, in two dubbing rooms."

Which leads one to wonder how Pressman, who helmed features as disparate as *Boulevard Nights*, *Some Kind of Hero*, *Those Lips, Those Eyes* and, most recently, *Doctor Detroit*, came to play den mother to four guys in animatronic Turtle suits. "There are certain logical reasons why I got this [assignment]," he explains. "There's also something, I think, that you can see buried in my work, which is an emphasis on comedies, one of which [*The Bad News Bears in Breaking Training*] was a very successful sequel to *The Bad News Bears*.

"The producers were looking for a director who did comedy, who could work under the pressures of a crazy schedule, and who had worked in television but was a feature film director. The producers hired Terry Morse, a producer I had worked with before on two TV movies, and a production designer [Roy Forge Smith] I had worked with before. Then, I discovered I was represented by the same law firm as Golden Harvest [the movie's production company]. So, a whole set of crazy coincidences came together."

There was also the added influence of 10-year-old Matthew Lawrence, a young actor Pressman worked with last spring in the TV movie *Joshua's Heart*. "He was totally into the Turtles, whom I had never heard of. He told me everything about them. Coincidentally, about that time I got a call from Terry Morse, who asked if I was interested in being considered for the Ninja Turtles

sequel. Under normal circumstances, I wouldn't have thought twice about doing it. But having talked with Matthew, I knew the Turtles were quite a phenomenon. So, I owe my interest in the Turtles to Matthew. When the deal came through, he couldn't believe it.

"I've turned down sequels generally, because I didn't want to do another sequel. But this one really piqued my interest. I went to see the first film, and I saw something in it that really turned me on, which was the characters of these Turtles. I found them really entertaining and special, and I thought there was a chance to do more with them in a sequel."

In *Secret of the Ooze*, the Turtles and their Ninja master, Splinter (again played by Kevin Clash), face off once more with the evil Asian kingpin Shredder, who learns of the existence of a radioactive substance manufactured by Techno-Global Research Industries—the very same "ooze" that, 15 years ago, gave Raphael, Donatello, Leonardo, Michaelangelo and Splinter their human characteristics and astonishing powers.

Elaborates Pressman, "Professor Jordan Perry, played by David Warner—a wonderful actor who contributed a lot to the film—works for TGRI, where he's working with mutations. The big fear is that his new ooze will get into the wrong hands—namely the Shredder's. And, of course, it does. Shredder uses the ooze to create two new mutant creatures: Tokka, a snapping turtle, and Rahzar, a wolf. The references are Bebop and Rocksteady, two mutant lowlife criminals who work for the Shredder in the cartoons."

Is Splinter Kevin Clash endorsing a new supplement for rivets...
He's actually revealing the Secret of the Ooze!

All Turtles Characters Trademark & Copyright Mirage Studios

According to Pressman, *Turtles II* is "a story about friendship and loyalty." Here, Splinter catches Keno's (Ernie Reyes Jr.) attention.

Some of the Turtles may have changed since the first film, but they still love their pizza.

Among the changes in *Turtles II* are the casting of a new Shredder (Francois Chau) and a new April (*Mr. Mom*'s and *My Children's* Paige Turco—see START/DG #166). The Turtles' hockey-masked fighting companion, Casey Jones (played by Elias Koteas), has been dropped and replaced, in effect, by a new character named Keno (Ernie Reyes Jr., Donatello's stunt double in the first *Turtles*), a pizza delivery boy well-versed in martial arts who joins forces with the pizza-munching four.

Casey Jones disappeared into the stratosphere, Pressman admits. "I personally think Elias is great. In fact, I gave him one of his first jobs in New York, a TV movie. I had hoped he would be in the sequel but there was no room for him in the storyline. It's so much focused on the Turtles, Splinter and Shredder, and we have the new creatures. It's jam-packed.

"I wasn't part of that [casting search for the new April], nor was I a part of the problems with Judith Hoag [April #1], so I really can't say [what happened]. I never got the complete, straight story. I think Judith is terrific, and so is Paige. They're very different. Paige is much stranger than Judith—Judith is much more offbeat. Curiously enough, it works in this movie, because April has less to do this time around. In some respects, she's the straight woman to these crazy Turtles. They're living in her new Soho loft."

Considering the hassles involved in finding a new April—100 actresses were considered, and four screen tests were made—why bring her back at all? "Because she's the Turtles' contact, she moves the story. Paige isn't as crucial as Judith's in the first one, but she does play a very key role

in terms of her being a news reporter and discovering some of the Ninja's mysteries. She's warmer. They will love her."

Only the most attentive audiences are likely to notice that *Turtles* features two new Turtle voices. Adam Carl as Donatello (replacing Corey Feldman) and Laurie Faso as Raphael (taking over for Josh Pais). Stunt doubles Pais and David Forman are out. Mark Caso and Sam Troum are in. Today, Faso, Carl and original Turtles Brian Tochi (STARLOG #160) and Robbie Rist are looping lines for the film's night club fight scene, responsible for the groans, grunts and exclamations ("Take *that*, you dickhead," one of them blurts out as they pose for a take) for Pressman and producer David Chan.

For added box-office/soundtrack album sales, red-hot rapper Vanilla Ice has a cameo in the film that Pressman describes as "a singer in a club that the Turtles come breaking into at the movie's end. He doesn't have a speaking part, he's just a singer in the Dockshore Club. His credit will probably read something like 'Guy in Black Pants & Ice.' He's on stage and the whole place goes into a panic because the Turtles start fighting these mutant creatures. His response is to start singing 'The Ninja Rap.'"

Pressman enjoyed the first film, directed by Steve Barron, but he questioned its murky tone. "I think that the style of the first movie was, Steve took comic book characters and put them into a very gritty, real world. I am making a movie about a comic book world, with real characters. In essence, I've the

All Turtles II Photos courtesy New Line Cinema

The producers may have found a way to save Michelangelo (left) after Let Adam Carl replaces Corey Feldman as the voice of Donatello

Turtles as very real, almost like people. But they exist in a comic book so the colors are primary and bright, and much more lively.

"The first film had a very adult sensibility, but the kids grabbed onto it. Our film has a young person's sensibility. When you say that, it immediately affects how you treat the action. This film is *much* less violent, much more humorous. I couldn't have made that first movie for eight-year-olds; it seemed too violent. I don't know why it was done that way."

In fact, Pressman found the first film's violence "gratuitous and exploitative. It seemed to go on without any kind of point-of-view. There's much less [violence] in this film, but not because of any pressure from [outside factions]—I responded truly to my own feelings, which happened to coincide with the parental group stuff.

"Still, I'm being careful to keep the superhero element of the storyline intact. The Turtles are still spectacular. They still do their karate fighting, but we use much less of their weapons. And they're more ingenious. Every sequence will have a point of view, there's an issue to be settled and they must take action on it. There's a sewer sequence where they're fighting over a canister of ooze: [I filmed it] like a football game, to give it a style and a certain imagery yet still make it fun."

Part of the fun, Pressman hopes, will be the unveiling of the new, improved Turtles. "The Henson Creature Shop has made some tremendous advancements in the Turtle animatronics," Pressman beams. "They did a phenomenal job. Even now, I watch the film and I can't believe the work that they've done. The first film was almost their prototype. The facial expressions are absolutely terrific; there's much more articulation in the [Turtles'] eyes and mouth. They could win awards for their work this time."

For sequence's opening, Pressman promised "an amazing challenge to see if you're dealing with the electronic suit over the physical remote-controlled heads and guys in Turtle suits doing stunts. These weren't your traditional special FX; they were done live, on the set. It was very, very arduous and time consuming, but the extra hours required were scheduled in, and we had three weeks of rehearsal. Luckily, I had lots of consultants, including David Chan and Pat Johnson, the stunt coordinator, both of whom worked on the first Turtles picture, and the people from the Henson Creature Shop."

Asked if his take on the Turtles more closely resembles that of the original comic books of creators Kevin Eastman & Peter Laird, the cartoons or the first movie, Pressman replies, "I don't think it's like *any* of them. My image for this movie is, Marx Brothers for five-year-olds, or *Blazing Saddles* for kids. The adults will enjoy it, too.

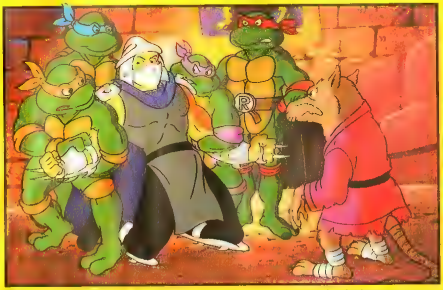
Pressman (center) says that he usually turns down doing sequels, but *Turtles II* "really piqued my interest."

Comedy works on a universal level. It should work for a five-year-old and an adult. If the film works for adults, it will touch the child in them. It's crazy and zany, yet it has a life of its own. If I had to compare it, it's a cross between the cartoon and the first movie."

While Pressman and screenwriter Todd W. Langen, who co-authored the first *Turtles* script with Bobby Herbeck, toyed with giving the sequel an environmental twist, they ultimately toned down the story's ecological message. In Pressman's words, "It just didn't fit. It was like trying to force something. This film is strictly a piece of entertainment. If it works, the kids are going to really feel like they've been given their money's worth—it's like a Disneyland 'E' ride: non-stop fun, comedy and action. My thinking is, if it's successful, it will firmly establish the Turtles [and allow us] to go on to something more meaningful.

"If I'm given the chance to do the

(continued on page 44)

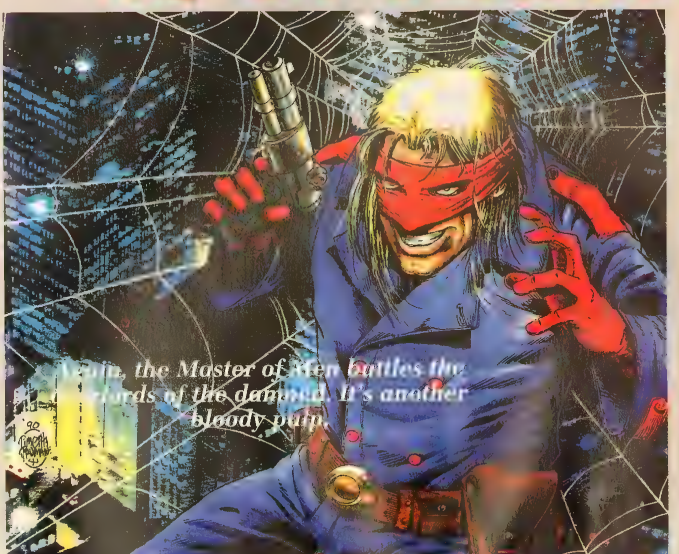


Art Copyright 1991 Marakami Wolf Swenson Inc.

Splinter and the Turtles face Shredder once again in the sequel, which Pressman calls "a cross between the cartoon and the first movie."

MARK OF THE SPIDER

By WILL MURRAY



I'm known for the twisted takes I put on things," writer/artist Tim Truman admits in his pleasant drawl of a voice. "This is *very* twisted. There's a darkness to this character with which I'm very comfortable. I haven't been at home with a character since I was drawing *Grimjack*."

Truman is waxing enthusiastic about his latest project for Eclipse Comics, a three-part limited series revival of the half-forgotten pulp hero who, according to Stan Lee, inspired Spider-Man—*The Spider*.

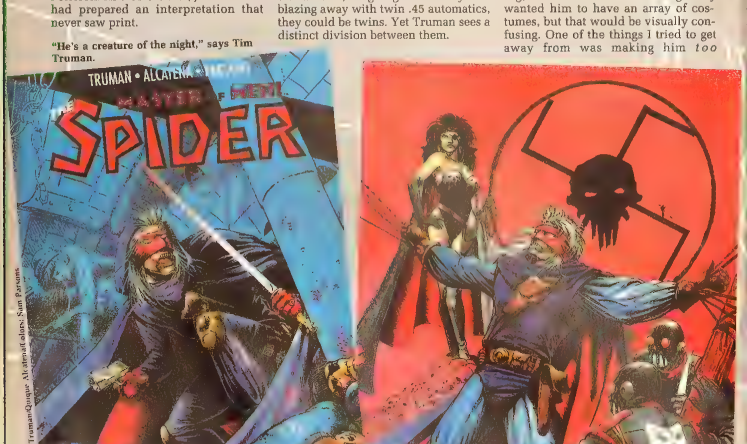
"He's a creature of the night," Truman explains, "but I could never see myself drawing Batman. Somehow, those skintight suits aren't very practical. My depiction of the Spider is a character I probably would have created if he never existed. One of the things I try to do as an artist is to show where many of these pulp images came from. The playboy aspect is something that Batman later picked up on. It was very interesting to find all these parallels between Batman and the Spider. It seems as if much of it was directly based on the Spider."

Before there was a Spider-Man, or a Batman, the Spider prowled America's newsstands. Conceived by Popular Publications President Henry Steeger as his answer to The Shadow, the Spider was really millionaire Richard Wentworth, possibly the most ruthless crimefighter of his or any other generation. R.T.M. Scott penned the first two Spider novels, creating a character more at home in a staid drawing-room mystery than a bloody pulp magazine. Perhaps that was why Scott was replaced by young pulp writer Norvell W. Page—writing as "Grant Stockbridge"—who transformed the character into a sinister dispenser of grim justice. More than a hundred fevered Spider novels were published

between 1933 and 1943. There were two Columbia serials—*The Spider's Web* and *The Spider Returns*—starring Warren Hull. Then, the character went into hibernation, except for sporadic paperback reprints.

Over the years, there have been several abortive attempts to revive the Spider in comics. As recently as two years ago, DC Comics had planned a version to be written by Jonathan Peterson. And before that, Jim Steranko had prepared an interpretation that never saw print.

"He's a creature of the night," says Tim Truman.



All Spider Comics Art Timothy Truman/Quique Alcatena/colors: Sam Parsons

This spring, Eclipse Comics will reunite writer/artist Truman, inker Quique Alcatena, colorist Sam Parsons and letterer Tim Harkins—the team behind DC's acclaimed *Hawkworld* (CS#8)—for a modern version of the self-styled Master of Men.

"I'm never going to work with Alcatena again," Truman says, mock-serious. "He's too good to be inking, as *Moving Fortress* and *Subterra* prove. I'm absolutely embarrassed to have this guy inking my stuff. He's so beyond that, I'm flattered beyond words that he has inked two of my projects. If I work with him again, I would just back off and do it as a writer."

It's not hard to understand why the Spider would be revived now. For a pulp hero, he was particularly ferocious. Compared to the Spider, the Punisher is a wimp. Next to the Spider, Batman is a model of psychological balance. He makes The Shadow seem reasonable.

The Spider is most often compared with The Shadow, and with good reason. Garbed in identical black cloaks, slouch hats, laughing maniacally and blazing away with twin .45 automatics, they could be twins. Yet Truman sees a distinct division between them.

Says Truman, "The Shadow always went around like this dark avenger, almost like a dark angel, but he never seemed to get overly emotional about his mission. It was just that—a mission. The Spider always got real wrapped up in what he was doing. I always got the impression that The Shadow was chortling just to scare the villains. With the Spider, whenever he would laugh about what he was doing, it was because there was some sort of thrill he was getting out of it. And that was always *scary*."

In the pulp stories, the Spider augmented his Shadow regalia with crazed, mad-scientist hair, a Quasimodoesque hump, and celluloid vampire teeth designed to suggest spider's fangs, all intended to instill an unreasoning fear of spiders into that superstitious and cowardly lot who toil in the underworld. It was such a bizarre image that he was routinely depicted in a simple domino mask on *Spider* magazine covers so as not to upset new readers—or their parents.

"I always liked the fact that this guy's real spooky and monstrous-looking," Truman notes. "I originally wanted him to have an array of costumes, but that would be visually confusing. One of the things I tried to get away from was making him *too* Shadow-like. I wanted to make him more synonymous with the Phantom of the Opera, and to get rid of the slouch hat. So, I tried for a horror look. I went with the long hair, more as a design device. You can really make him look horrific with these appliances. When I first designed the character, I wanted the mask across his face to look like bandages. Suddenly, there was *Darkman* and I had to ditch that idea."

Truman opted for a red cloth mask that suggests a bandage.

Truman has returned to the pulps for this three-issue mini-series, loosely adapting the 1934 novel *Corpse Cargo*. The villainess is Captain Kidd.

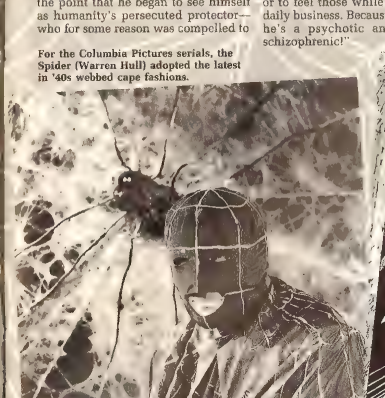
"You come away with the impression that he's somehow psychologically wounded. Which *is* the case with the Spider."

Before Peter Parker worried about the great responsibilities that came with his spider powers, Richard Wentworth was subject to fits of despair and paranoia over his role as the Spider, which took over his life to the point that he began to see himself as humanity's persecuted protector—who for some reason was compelled to brand his criminal victims on the forehead with the sign of the Spider.

"I've kept the man-about-town aspect," Truman explains. "In revamping the character, we've had to make his source of income a little more believable, and make him able to be a free agent. We came up with this little scenario where Richard Wentworth is the heir to a fortune and his parents are killed tragically—which is another pulp cliché—and he's raised by Dr. Brownlee, a scientist. After he's grown up, Wentworth finds he must get away from his background, so he joins the armed forces. In the scenario I created, he's a spook, attached to this special forces unit. They have to do all sorts of tactics, things like intimidating the enemy by cutting off their heads and putting brands on their foreheads."

In the pulps, the line between Wentworth and his alter-ego soon became blurred. Truman's *Spider* pushes that to the edge.

"Wentworth starts to realize that some of these dark feelings that he has as the Spider start to spill over into his personal life. And he doesn't know which is worse—to keep them separate or to feel those while going about his daily business. Because one means that he's a psychotic and the other, a schizophrenic!"



For the Columbia Pictures serials, the Spider (Warren Hull) adopted the latest in '40s webbed cape fashions.

Photos: Copyright 1938 Columbia Pictures/Courtesy Dan Scapperotti

While the Spider has been merely updated, the supporting cast has been reconfigured to work around now-cliché pulp stereotypes, which attracts Truman on a gut level, but which he also feels compelled to justify and make plausible.

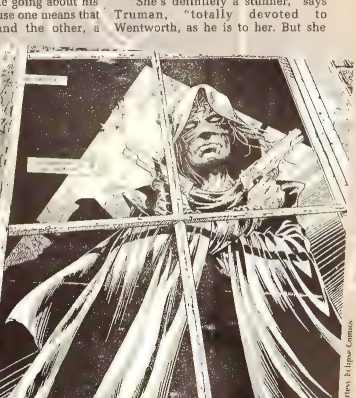
"I played with the Hindu aspect of Ram Singh, the most outright religious character," Truman says of Wentworth's chief aide. "It was never really experimented with in the novels. Sometimes he would be called a Hindu and sometimes, a Sikh. I chose Hindu for the sheer color of its religion. There are more avatars than avengers."

The pulp Ram Singh was a fierce fighter, often accompanying the Spider into mortal combat. Not here.

"Ram actually sees Wentworth as one of Vishnu's avengers," Truman explains. "Ram Singh does a lot of praying to the Hindu gods. I don't play with it like I did in *Scout*. It isn't overt. It's all in Ram's mind."

A third major cast member is Nita Van Sloan. The original Nita was Wentworth's faithful fiancée, forever selflessly postponing her wedding because humanity needed the Spider more than she needed Wentworth.

"She's definitely a stunner," says Truman, "totally devoted to Wentworth, as he is to her. But she isn't an airhead. I've done interesting things between Ram Singh and Nita in that Ram sees Nita as a threat, and doesn't really appreciate her."



Truman's version veers toward the Phantom of the Opera, edging away from the familiar Shadow.

All Spider Comics Art: Courtesy Eclipse Comics

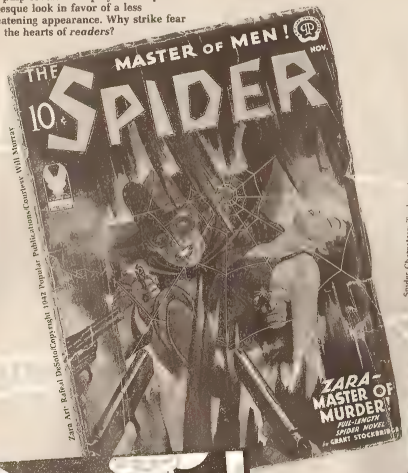
Rounding out the cast is Wentworth's close friend and the Spider's nemesis, Police Commissioner Stanley Kirkpatrick.

"I'm convinced that Commissioner Gordon is based on Stanley Kirkpatrick because of the relationship between Bruce Wayne and Commissioner Gordon," theorizes Truman. "I want to get him away from that, and the way I did it was that I said, 'OK, he's Cab Calloway! He's a '30s view of a 1990s black police commissioner. A flashy dresser, and not at all a police commissioner type."

Truman frankly admits that commercial considerations have played a role in the decision to place the series in the present day. But, of course, with a twist.

"I didn't know if I wanted to do *The Spider* as a '30s story or a '90s story,"

The pulp covers downplayed the Spider's grotesque look in favor of a less threatening appearance. Why strike fear into the hearts of *readers*?

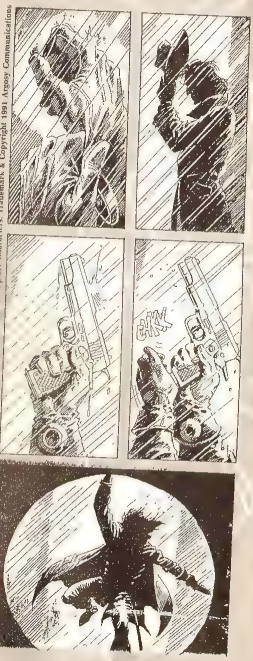


Zara Art Rafal DeSota Copyright 1942 Popular Publications Courtesy Will Murray

he relates, "so I said, 'Well, I'm going to do it as a '90s story but as *written* in the '30s.' That means that the writer who was writing this stuff in the '30s wouldn't have known about World War II, the Vietnam War and all that stuff. So, I have this war in India, where the League of Nations are sending troops. And that's where Richard Wentworth met Ram Singh—in the Indus Valley War."

The three-part story is a loose adaptation of a 1934 early *Spider* novel, *Corpse Cargo* (reprinted in paperback by Dimedia in 1985).

This Spider tale is "a '90s story as written in the '30s."



Spider Characters Trademark & Copyright 1991 Argosy Communications

Updating pulp clichés. Truman made Richard (Spider) Wentworth's servant Ram Singh a faithful Hindu who no longer fights alongside the Spider.

"I asked what are some of the problems that I see in any attempt at elevating this—doggone it—trash?" Truman explains. "I thought, rather than create a plot out of whole cloth, I'm just going to sit down with one of the books and just pull that book apart and give this whole thing a different slant. That'll take rearranging characters, ditching some plot elements and condensing stuff. But it addresses what I wanted to do with revamping a pulp character. I also wanted to have a female villain. There's a real bizarre aspect to having a female villain—a bit of sexiness involved, and some eroticism."

The villain is typically Spideresque—a depraved lady pirate called Captain Kidd who electrifies railroad tracks, frying train passengers so they can be robbed with impunity.

"I wanted to build a place where people think about the power of electricity, rather than atomic energy," Truman says. "And the device in that book is an electrical device. The Spider is after these childnappers. He finds out that this group is using these kids for human sacrifice and it points to even more far-reaching, insidious deeds. It's a pretty straightforward ac-

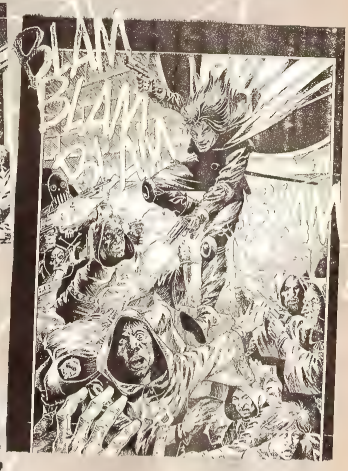
tion thing. That's what I like to do—take these clichés that we've all been fascinated with and say, 'OK, what's this *really* mean?' "

Will this limited *Spider* lead to a regular book?

Wentworth now oversees a vast financial empire. "He'll be in a corporate board meeting," Truman says, "and feel compelled to reach out and take someone's throat in his hands."

Fans of Truman's earlier Eclipse crimefighter, the Prowler, will recognize in the Spider the primary inspiration for that acclaimed series. Now that he's doing the original, does this mean that the Prowler is dead?

"I hope not," Truman says at first. Then, he adds, "To all practical purposes, yeah. But who knows? It might be interesting to have the Prowler and Spider team up. All the typical comic bookish fantasies come into play. I still think the Prowler was the best writing I've ever done except for *Wilderness*. Some day it will get the recognition it deserves. It's interesting. Michael Price, who did the *Prowler* backups, interviewed [*Darkman* director] Sam Raimi and asked him if he read the comics. And he said, 'Yeah.' And *The Prowler* was one of the first titles he came up with!"



When the Spider laughed, "it was because he was getting a thrill out of his actions," Truman notes. "That was *always* scary."

There may be further exploits for this comics Spider—perhaps he could meet Truman's earlier pulp-influenced crimefighter, the Prowler?

Now that he has revived one of the classic pulp heroes, does Tim Truman have plans to bring others before a modern audience?

"I would like to see somebody do *G-8 & His Battle Aces*," he says. "I don't necessarily think I'm going to be drawing it because I'm not that adept at aviation illustration. I would like to see G-8, or Operator #5. In fact, I wanted to drop him into *The Spider* as a cameo. Ideally, what *The Spider* represents is a springboard for a whole pulp universe, and we've set it up for that."

Adapting more famous 1930s pulp heroes into comic book characters has seldom led to success, but Truman feels that the Spider's relative obscurity will work in his favor—if he treads carefully.

"One of the advantages to the Spider is that there isn't as prolific a cult following as there is for The Shadow," he points out. "So, I can take a few more liberties. But just as with when I redid Hawkman, I realized that there are many people out there who have an affection for the character. So, I've got to respect their memories. I *don't* want to trash the Spider."

"If it's successful, I'm sure there'll be more," Truman says carefully. "I'll leave myself open-ended on projects because I'm not into doing regular books anymore. I've probably got an option on returning to the character, or at least acting as a creative advisor. I would love to come back to *The Spider*, but there are also many other things I would love to do."

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McKean

(continued from page 28)

"When I started out on *Hellblazer*, [editor] Karen Berger didn't know what I was going to do, so I had to indicate pretty clearly what I was going to do before doing it. Now, they had just let me get on with it, seeing as how I talk to Neil Gaiman [CS #17] nearly every day. So, I know what's happening in the book five or six issues ahead—practically as soon as he knows. We plan out covers and styles, and I work everything out with Neil."

McKean has also discovered that the transition into comics writing has not been an easy one. "It's hell!" he laughs. "It's *extremely* difficult, just because I haven't done it before. I'm trying to make it as best as I can, because it's very, very hard!

"It's not like I have a particular problem with writing dialogue or anything," he observes. "It just comes very slowly. Most of my paintings don't take more than a day! I like things to happen very quickly, which is why I've developed [an artistic] style that's very quick. I like that energy, I like to keep it moving. Because the writing is so slow—simply through lack of practice, I'm sure—it's painstaking. But it gets there in the end, so it's not so bad. It's just keeping that focus going for such a long time."

The artist's fans will be seeing more McKean work soon. He drew Jamie Delano's final *Hellblazer* story (now out) and is currently doing a *Hellraiser* story (written by Neil Gaiman). In addition, his acclaimed *Black Orchid* mini-series will be published in trade paperback form, and *Violent Cases* will be released in color in America. There are also plans to publish *Signal to Noise* as a collected book, as well as sketchbooks.

"I spent almost a year off just getting *Cages* together and sorting out what I wanted to do, as well as doing some film work. I also had to decide whether I wanted to do any more comics, but now, I feel more enthusiastic about them than ever, and can't wait to get all these things down on paper!"

Dave McKean credits his current project for his newfound enthusiasm. "It's largely because of *Cages*. It has been really liberating because it's such a simple style, and it's really just the absolute necessities of the drawing. There's no flash, no piles of paint and textures. That doesn't mean to say I'm not going to paint anything anymore. It's just put me in a different frame of mind. Because of the absolute necessities of the drawing and storytelling, *Cages* has been wonderful. I haven't ever enjoyed doing a comic so much!"

Pressman

(continued from page 38)

third movie—which I'm not contractually signed to do at this point—I would use that opportunity to deal with important themes like prejudice, social issues and ecology. You've got kids as a captive audience, and I feel a responsibility to show them things and teach them and change them—things that this movie does not attempt to do."

Phenomena, by definition, have a short shelf life. If indeed America's current obsession with the Turtles is just another fad, might it already be on the way out? Has Turtlemania peaked? "There's no indication that it has," Pressman replies. "In fact, Turtlemania is almost like Beatlemania. Kids are fanatically hooked into these four creatures the way I was with the Beatles when I was 12 years old. There seems to be that same kind of fascination at work here, from the ages of two to 12. So, I've seen no let-up; in fact, I've seen the phenomenon grow."

Pressman feels as though he has come "full circle" since directing his first low-budget feature, *The Great Texas Dynamite Chase*, made for $200,000 in 1977. "*The Secret of the Ooze* has an $18 million budget, but budgets aren't the thing—you can make a $12 million picture and feel it's tight, and you can make a $2 million picture and feel you have a lot of room. In a curious way, after having had a hiatus of six or seven years from features, and working in television, I feel like I'm starting over again. They say that life begins at 40. Well, I'm 40, and I feel like I'm just beginning. In that sense, it's very exciting.

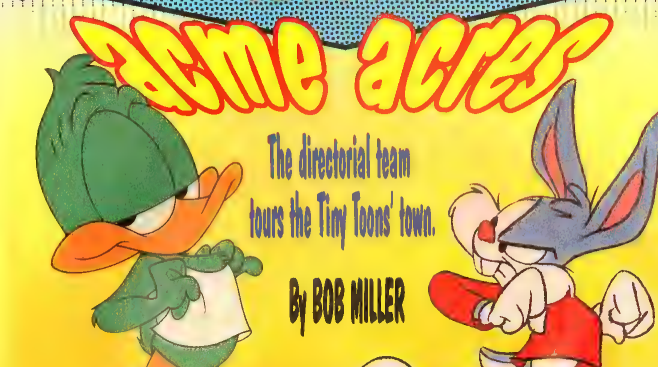
"It feels like where I started when I was 25, when I made my venture into feature filmmaking [with *Dynamite Chase*]. This feels like a first movie. There's a sort of innocence about it; I had to get into the heads of children to make this movie. What happens from here, hopefully, is that I'll get a chance to explore my particular passions and start making my own films."

Might there be a subtextual message in *Secret of the Ooze* that adolescent moviegoers can take to heart? Definitely, says Michael Pressman. "This is a story about friendship and loyalty, but it's also the story of the Turtles' search for their origin—where they came from, who their family is, who their parents are. For me, that's the movie's emotional thread. What they eventually find out is, not only did they not come from any parents—that they were mutated due to an accident—but that you really can't find your worth in the past, that you must learn to find your value in terms of who *you* are, not *where* you came from. That's really the film's message."

DIRECTIONS THROUGH Acme acres

The directorial team tours the Tiny Toons' town.

By BOB MILLER



Bluster Art: Ken Boyer

A cartoon director must wear many hats. For a while, he's a character designer; for another part of the day, he's a storyboard artist; and yet again, he's a key animator, and other times, he's timing out things."

That's how Ken Boyer describes himself and his peers on *Tiny Toon Adventures*. Boyer joins Rich Arons, Gerald Baldwin, Kent Butterworth, Eddie Fitzgerald, Art Leonardi and Art Vitello—who've discussed the series in COMICS SCENE #15, #16 & #17—in directing a new generation of Warner Bros. characters. They're tackling a production schedule as frenzied as the cartoons they create.

"We're working about three or four times as fast as they used to do with the old Warner shorts," says Art Vitello. "In the time they would turn out a six-minute cartoon, we're turning out 21 minutes' worth. It's not possible to get the same results they did. But sometimes, we're getting pretty good results by virtue of how hard we're working."

To handle the work load, Warners has established a variation on the unit system, previously used in their theatrical shorts. With this system, the director presides over nearly every phase of production, using a unit of artists who work directly under him.

"Each unit handles about 15 episodes out of the total 65," says Vitello. "That would be like a normal series' worth of episodes (13 segments). Instead of knocking them out over the summer, we spent a year-and-a-half on them."

"Unfortunately, because of the speed and time element, we don't have the luxury we had at Warners," says Art Leonardi, who worked with Friz Freleng on the original shorts. "At the time, the unit was a director, a background man, one story man, one layout man, three animators and three assistants. Then, we had a bunch of men in the in-between department. So, after assistant work was done, it would go to them and they would do the in-betweens.

"Today, our animators and assistants are overseas. So, we have to make contact at a distance. That makes it difficult."

"What we do is do all the pre-production here, including all the rough layouts," explains producer/director director Tom Ruegger. "This translates into animation in that we do *all* the key posing, so there isn't a whole lot left to the imagination overseas. It's the labor-intensive in-betweening, cleanup and paint that we're putting over there because of the cost factors."

Just as animation aficionados can tell the difference between cartoons made by Friz Freleng, Chuck Jones and Bob McKimson, so do the *Tiny Toons* directors hope their own styles will be evident.

Ruegger tries to make certain that each episode is consistent with the whole series.

"This is a Steven Spielberg-Warner Bros. production," he notes. "While it addresses many Warner Bros. traditions, it also addresses Spielbergian principles, and it has been my job to make sure those two forces come together and meld in a nice way.

"Sometimes, it doesn't always go together that well and there are negotiations. There are cartoons that Steven wants that maybe our guys are having trouble producing. Originally, we wanted to do shorts exclusively, and then, we started to get into some half-hour shows. That was a different type of thing, and some of our people balked at that. Then, we went back to shorts. We bounced back and forth a few times. We have about 25 half-hour episodes and 40 sets of shorts, a pretty good mix."

As producer, Ruegger has a host of other duties.

"Along with Andrea Romano, my voice director, I go to all of the voice sessions, so I definitely get a consistency there in the actors' performances. I look over everything. When we get footage back, I'm involved pretty deeply in editing. I'm not a producer in the sense that I'm worried about money, which I think my boss wishes I *was* worried about. Basically, it's a fun creative job.

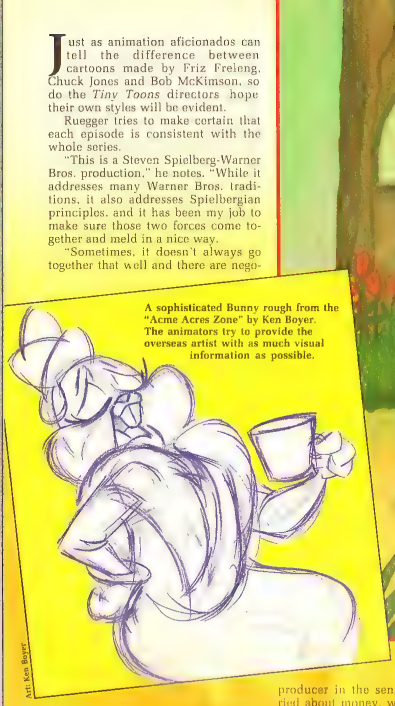
"And I keep Steven abreast on how we're moving on stories and he'll give me and the other directors notes on the scripts and the storyboards, and we try to address them."

The directors *don't* get to choose the scripts on which they work. Rather, Ruegger assigns the scripts to directors as they're available. The director reads the script, then assigns the story to a storyboard artist, who illustrates it in a series of panels, in a format similar to comic strips. Meanwhile, the director or a model artist designs that episode's props and incidental characters. Later, the storyboard is reviewed by the director, at a stage Ken Boyer calls "storyboard enhancement."

"We always 'plus' the scripts dramatically when they go to storyboard," Boyer says. As a director, I took the responsibility to do that many times because most board artists would be straightforward to the scripts. And it isn't very funny if it isn't a very good script. So, you add things."

The director turns in the finished storyboard to producer Ruegger and then to Amblin for approval.

"Sometimes, Spielberg would hate the script, even after he would OK it. He would see it in board form and hate it," one director says. "That would kill us, because we spent three weeks boarding the damn thing and now it was out the window and we're way behind schedule and so we've got to start all over from scratch. That happened a couple of times and we had to make up for lost time."



A sophisticated Bunny rough from the "Acme Acres Zone" by Ken Boyer. The animators try to provide the overseas artist with as much visual information as possible.

Art: Ken Boyer

All Tiny Toons Characters & Art Copyright 1990, 1991 Warner Bros. Inc.

One of the show's difficulties is that the writers try to use all of the large Acme Acres cast in every episode.

somehow into the *Tiny Toons* episodes was—board pages and drawing-wise—every bit as much work. Page-for-page, the same page count as the 11-minute.

"But at *Tiny Toons*, the production was too fast. They allowed only two weeks. Some shows would run over to three or four weeks. You had to catch up to the next one. You had to overlap things to stay on schedule."

With such a large cast populating Acme Acres, drawing them consumed a great deal of time. "The biggest drawback with *Tiny Toons* was that the writers had a tendency to put a million characters into every episode. And that was never the winning combination which made the original Warner Bros. cartoons so good. It was two to three characters in a cartoon, max—with Bugs, Elmer and Daffy, or with just Bugs and Daffy. The really best *Tiny Toons* are the same thing, when we pair off just a couple of characters, like Elmyra and Buster," Boyer says.

Warners schedules two weeks for storyboard, two weeks for the layout phase. Simultaneously, character and prop models are designed in addition to key background designs and color background keys. In all, it takes a month to six weeks to prepare a three-act show.

Says Boyer, "When you're handed the script, it's like, 'Make it magic, now.' And they would give you very little time to think about it. It was one of the more frustrating aspects of the project, but you just learn to be quick-witted and make do."

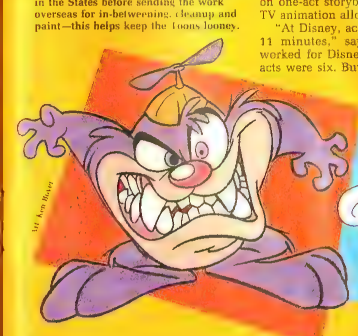
During the storyboard phase, recording sessions are held at B & B Sound in Burbank. But—in a depar-

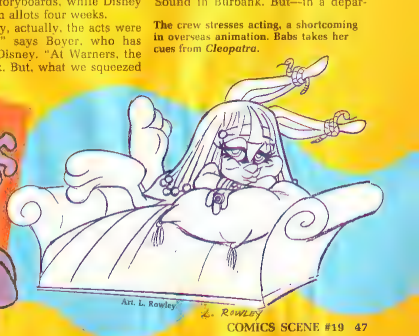
The animators do all the key posing here in the States before sending the work overseas for in-betweening, cleanup and paint—this helps keep the Toons looney.

Amblin allows two weeks to work on one-act storyboards, while Disney TV animation allots four weeks.

"At Disney, actually, the acts were 11 minutes," says Boyer, who has worked for Disney. "At Warners, the acts were six. But, what we squeezed

The crew stresses acting, a shortcoming in overseas animation. Babs takes her cues from *Cleopatra*.

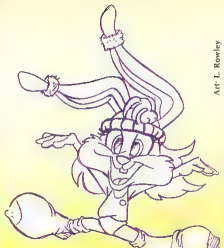




ture from the traditional unit system—the voice actors are usually *not* handled by the animation director.

"It depends on the scheduling," says Rich Arons. "If the director is really too busy, and quite frankly, there are many times where we can't leave the studio, then usually, Tom Ruegger or Andrea Romano handle the actors.

"Sometimes, shows get recorded and you're not there and they recorded something with the wrong attitude, from what you think would be funnier, better or dramatic. And it's possible to go back and change stuff. Get a new reading or a different actor to do it. I've had very good experiences where I've gone and directed the actors, and I was able to change lines and attitudes that I wanted to change."



Art: L. Rowley

With only a two-week time period to turn around one-act storyboards, the crew makes the most of their Jane Bunda workout.

The directors had to "uneducate" their animators, making them forget habits picked up at other studios and getting them to think in classic Warner's style.

Art: Ken Boyer

When the animation comes back from overseas, the animators are usually dumbfounded by what's lost in the translation.

At the layout stage, where the artists render key poses for animation, they listen to the recording to match drawings to performances.

"One of the things that Warners did right was to have the layouts done here," says Eddie Fitzgerald. "It made *all* the difference. Some studios just send storyboards over. We take the storyboard and do pose drawings for all those sequences and we send it over with a *lot* of visual information. In some cases, even the animation."

Says animator Chuck Harvey, "One man can lay out up to 20 to 25 scenes per week. So, if you have a three or four-man crew, you can do a show in two weeks, laying it out. That makes *all* the difference in the world."

In the layout stage, Ken Boyer explains, the director sometimes acts as a layout supervisor.

"The layout supervisor does technically many things, like checking registration and field sizes and backgrounds," he says. "On top of that, my main concern was the acting. We had to really punch those poses up and give them, really unique expressions for the acting, things that you don't ever see coming from overseas.

"While the layout people are doing the layouts, I drop in to help them out to get better acting, if they're in trouble. Otherwise, I'm 'slugging' the storyboard.

"When I 'slug' the storyboard, I break down all the individual actions I draw thumbnail poses all over the board to show the missing beats of the action *between* the storyboard poses. It might just be after the character does something in the storyboard panel, you might want them to turn left to camera and then look offstage. That look might be missing from the board and we need that extra time to build up the acting so the next cut will look better."

One problem that Kent Butterworth discovered was "many artists—even some of the old guys who *had* worked at Warner Bros. in the old days—were stuck in formula ways of producing TV animation, the bad habits they learned at other studios. So, we had to 'uneducate' them, trying to get them back to the open free-form style of the traditional Warners cartoons."

The most complicated stage, according to Boyer, is getting all the elements ready for shipping. The director collects all the layouts, models, backgrounds and keys, and checks the exposure sheets against the layouts. This usually takes two days, though the time is restricted by the deadline.

Meanwhile, the director is already preparing for the next show. It usually takes four months for the subcontractors—such as Wang Film Production Co., Ltd. of Taiwan, Akom Productions Co. of Korea, Glen Kennedy of Canada and Tokyo Movie Shinsha of Japan—to process each show, providing the in-between drawings, cleaning them up, painting the cels and backgrounds, and shooting them on camera.

When the show returns from overseas, it arrives in sections, with one six-minute show having 16 sections. The in-house editor loops them all together and syncs up the track. Then, the director is called in to check it.

Sometimes, the directors discover that the overseas studios have added their own gags, Art Vitello notes.

"It seems like most good artists like to add that little extra something along the line," he remarks. "It isn't so off-base that it totally disrupts events. When you get a film back, you'll be seeing stuff, 'Good, good, good, good.' Suddenly, you might see a little gag that hits you out of nowhere. It's like, 'Where did *that* come from? Oh, that's good.' "

But sometimes, the gags intended for the show don't survive overseas production. Scenes can be spoiled by artists not following the character designs, or the action can be mistimed, or the wrong colors used, or a character might speak another character's

(continued on page 52)

toon timing

Photo Courtesy Rich Arons

"I really like spoofing something that's a classic," notes Richard Arons.

I see the world, or at least the cartoon world, perhaps more radically. I lean more towards the Bob Clampett style. I like that kind of humor," says *Tiny Toons* director Rich Arons.

"Also, I go for faster timing and more extreme gags. Maybe a *bit* more absurd. A little less logical, perhaps. I'll go further to make the joke. There are so many ways to approach a joke."

Arons began training as an artist at an early age. Growing up in New York, he attended the Famous Arts School when he was 10. He went to the High School of Art and Design for three years, followed by the School of Visual Arts for half a year. In late 1977, he moved with his family to California. There, he trained at CalArts, the Disney-sponsored fine arts college, where he received his degree in character animation.

"When I went to CalArts, I really learned a lot about Disney, because they had some of those old-timers there teaching," Arons recalls. "I had Elmer Plummer, T. Hee and Bill Moore, who had also taught at Chouinard and worked at Disney. Also Ken O'Connor, one of the great Disney background artists, and Jack Hannah."

But what Arons learned was not any particular style, but a certain amount of substance.

"The great thing about CalArts was, even though Disney was supporting the school, the teachers at that time didn't necessarily promote Disney style. They promoted formal art principle, which you could apply at whatever level you wanted to go to, whether people wanted to go into animation, background design or wherever. It's the *principle* that you got out of it. And it was up to you to learn exactly how you wanted to apply it."

"There are so many ways to approach a joke," says Arons—but it helps to have wacky characters like Gogo-Dodo and Concorde Condor.

His first job was Ralph Bakshi's *Lord of the Rings* in 1977, after which he continued to do assistant work for Hanna-Barbera, Ruby-Spears and various commercials. Then from 1985-1988, Arons worked at Filmation, animating *She-Ra*, *Bravestarr* and *Ghostbusters* for Lou Scheimer, and freelancing at different places during that time. In 1988, he drew layouts at DIC Enterprises on the short-lived *Beany & Cecil*, followed by *Super Mario Brothers*.

Then, in 1989, Arons joined the staff at *Tiny Toon Adventures*, drawing layouts and progressing to storyboards. That August, he was promoted to director, managing the same artists he had worked with on *Beany & Cecil*. Among his episodes: "Best of Plucky Duck Day," "L'il Sneezer," "The Teddy Bears Picnic" and co-directing the pilot episode, "The Looney Beginning." His favorite short, "Never Too Late To Loon," makes fun of the pink elephant sequence in *Dumbo*.

"I really like spoofing something that's a classic," Arons admits. "I think we pulled that off pretty well. I animated quite a bit of it, but they [TMS, the Japanese subcontractor] did an excellent job of following through. That whole bit where Plucky is being chased by the little Einstein cars, I just worked it all out on the bar sheet with the music, and then I transferred it over onto the exposure sheets. And then sent that over with all the layouts, including the distortion drawings, any kind of smear drawings, and all the antics. They did a great job on the drawings."

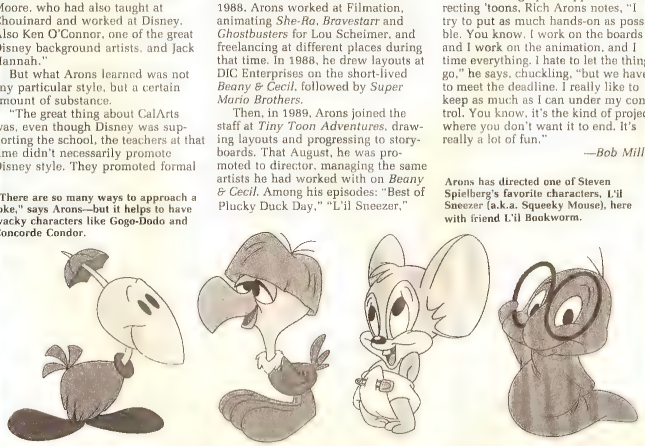
What has Rich Arons learned in his first year as a director?

"Oh, boy." He sighs. "I've learned *so* much. As an animator, you don't think about many of the other things. But as a director, you learn so much about dealing with the sound and the music and then the color, too. It's such a big process.

"I *think* I've learned how to get the best out of people, to get their input. I like to think I'm a good listener. I listen to what suggestions the artists have, and then make a decision that works best for the total show.

In summing up his approach to directing 'toons, Rich Arons notes, "I try to put as much hands-on as possible. You know, I work on the boards and I work on the animation, and I time everything. I hate to let the thing go," he says, chuckling, "but we have to meet the deadline. I really like to keep as much as I can under my control. You know, it's the kind of project where you don't want it to end. It's really a lot of fun."

—Bob Miller



Arons has directed one of Steven Spielberg's favorite characters, L'il Sneezer (a.k.a. Squeeky Mouse), here with friend L'il Bookworm.

Awaiting Armageddon 2001

Art: Dan Jurgens/Terry Austin

One of Earth's heroes rules the future—but which hero? And which future?

By MICHAEL McAVENNIE

Unlike most people, DC Comics looks forward to Armageddon—*Armageddon 2001*, that is. Co-editor Jonathan Peterson describes the two issue mini-series as "bookends," with the first issue leading into several annuals, including *Superman* #3, *Batman* #15, *Justice League* #5, *New Titans* #7, *Hawkworld* #2, *Flash* #1, *Action Comics* #3, *Hawk & Dove* #2, *Adventures of Superman* #3, *L.E.G.I.O.N. '91* #2, *Detective Comics* #4 and *Justice League Europe* #2. The second half, *Armageddon 2001* #2, will appear in comics shops later.

According to Peterson, "*Armageddon 2001* begins with Matthew Ryder, a family man in the year 2001. It's a dark future, one in which all heroes have been wiped out and everyone is ruled by a super-powered being named Monarch. Ryder attempts to change this dark age for his family and friends by going back in time and stopping Monarch before he comes to power.

"While traveling through the time stream, Ryder metamorphoses into a new hero called Waverider, giving him the power to see into possible futures," Peterson adds. "He arrives in the year 1991, and is determined to figure out who Monarch is. He soon realizes, however, that Monarch is actually a major hero in the DC Universe. So, Waverider goes from annual to annual, using the time stream to see the possible futures of each hero and discover the villain's identity."

The new hero will make several time trips with characters appearing in more than one annual, including

Absolute power corrupting absolutely? It sure looks that way in this year's *Superman Annual*.

AND IF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT CONTINUES ITS SECRET RE-ARMING PROGRAM--
--THE PRICE YOU WILL RUN IT GHER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE.

Art: Barry Abell/Terry Austin

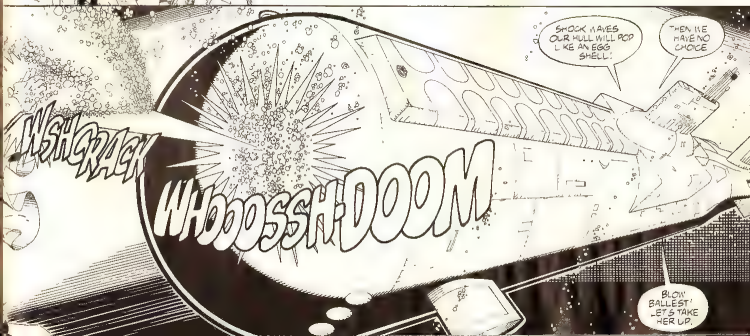
Superman and Batman. "Time is like a river," Peterson explains, "and you can always throw rocks into that river and cause many ripples. Waverider is going to visit Superman three times, and each time, he'll see a different possible future for him."

Waverider's eventual discovery of Monarch's true identity "will lead into a fight with all the superheroes," according to the editor. "In addition, the hero will become Monarch in the present, rather than the future, and he will *remain* a villain in the DC Universe." Who is he? Jonathan Peterson isn't saying, noting that Monarch's identity is a closely-guarded secret, even in the offices of DC Comics, and won't become apparent to anyone until Armageddon. *Armageddon 2001* #2, that is.

Monarch's identity is "a closely-guarded secret," even at the offices of DC Comics, says co-editor Jonathan Peterson.

Is Lobo really Monarch? Judging by the way the character acts now, will it really make a difference?

Even longtime do-gooders Superman and Batman are suspected of becoming the future's Monarch.


WSHCRACK
WHOOOSSH-DOOM
SHOCK WAVES OUR HULL WILL POP LIKE AN EGG SHELL!
THEN WE HAVE NO CHOICE
BLOW BALLEST! LET'S TAKE HER UP.

Toons

(continued from page 48)

dialogue. The director and Tom Ruegger pigeon-hole these mistakes, while an animation checker takes notes to send back overseas for re-takes, telling them what to fix.

As in the original Warners shorts, each story is individually scored. The day the show arrives from overseas, a dupe is made for composer Bruce Broughton. The director reviews the show with Broughton, or one of his assistants, in a "spotting session."

"Basically, we just watch a video-tape. We go through the show, sequence by sequence, and tell him what we think the music's mood should be or what type of instruments to use," details Arons.

The director also specifies which sound effects he wants. Tom Maydeck, the sound engineer, is said to have more than a million sound FX in his library, which can imitate the original Warners sound FX or be used for any "off-the-wall" sound.

Post-production lasts a month to six weeks per episode. Music and sound FX are mixed into the program, retakes are cut into the final print, and then, it's sent to Tele-Cine. Technicians clean up dirty frames, remove scratches and balance the color. Thus, after three months, a 30-minute episode is completed.

Though *Tiny Toon Adventures* is a big step for TV animation quality, the directors point out that the state-of-the-art could still be improved.

Says Eddie Fitzgerald, "We've done the layouts here. As a result, it's a tremendous improvement on the product. Now, the next stage is to do the animation here. There are not enough people currently available, but we *need* to make the investment of time and money that it takes to train a new generation of animators, and that'll get us even *more* control."

"*Tiny Toons* is only scratching the surface," Ken Boyer says. "For me, it's still clumsy and awkward. It could be completely the standard of the old Warner Bros. cartoons. I don't think the time is allowed to make them as lush as Disney feature films, but it certainly offers enough time to do them every bit as full as the original Warner Bros. cartoons. And *Tiny Toons* is very full.

"The next step in improving TV animation will be the company that decides to bring back just the rough animation to the States so we aren't just doing character layout poses any more. We would actually be timing out the characters, putting in the breakdown drawings and all the secondary keys that will make it really come alive, like the old Warner days."

Infinity

Surfer Art: Ron Lim

(continued from page 12)

The Silver Surfer races from his own book to warn the Marvel Universe about the all-powerful Thanos.

early '70s. Much of that was where I was going, in a sort of surrealistic version of it. I'm not at that point anymore, and I must right away say that the new series will *not* be a reflection of me now.

"Basically, I like Warlock because he was a creature born without parentage, good maturity on his own, controlled, without any unconventional upbringing and had found Nirvana for a number of years," he continues. "The events that take place in *The Infinity Gauntlet* will radically change him. I'm going to throw him in with four other very strange characters, and it will be a kind of group book that no one has ever seen. Because of that, I really think we're going to get some very interesting stories out of the series."

Although Jim Starlin has written and drawn numerous stories over the years, a great deal of his popularity comes from his cosmic-themed work. "I'm more identified with the type," he concludes. "I write many different kinds of stories, but these seem to go over better than most. They are fun to do. You can let your fantasies run free and just have a good time with them. With characters like Warlock and the Silver Surfer, you can get more into the allegorical without getting to a point where you can't really make contact with these characters as individuals. I mean, they allow themselves to be human, while at the same time, they are able to do these fantastic things. They are ways of venting the ol' psyche and letting things out."

Rocketeer

(continued from page 20)

they couldn't find another writer who had the affinity for *The Rocketeer* that we had, and so, they had to keep bringing us back."

While script changes would keep coming right up until the last day of lensing, the writers report that matters became much more manageable once Joe (*Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*) Johnston took over the directorial reins.

"Changes were fairly minor at that point. The actors wanted certain things, production would demand certain things. Disney would be unhappy with certain things and send us notes. Originally, the film's ending was a much bigger sequence that had an armada of planes and a lot of air-to-ground battles and, because of budget considerations, we had to pull much of that back," Bilson relates.

De Meo adds, "Joe [Johnston] had specific ideas and what I found more often than not was we had to get into a scene and pare it down in an attempt to keep things moving. He basically wanted to keep things simple."

Bilson and De Meo took their affection for *The Rocketeer* to the next logical step by co-writing with Stevens the last two chapters of a three-part comic book script for *The Rocketeer Adventure Magazine*. Bilson reports that their story, in which Cliff Secord goes to New York, was written at Christmas '86. "It's taken a long time for that to be published because Dave just doesn't draw very fast. Hopefully, the last part will be out soon."

The writers think *The Rocketeer* is ripe with sequel potential. Danny Bilson believes that a sequel should take advantage of their already written Cliff-in-New-York comic book script.

"There's a whole lot of potential for future films," he says. "This first film takes place in only a two-day time span. It's only the Rocketeer's origin and Cliff barely knows what he's doing by the end."

Paul De Meo agrees but with some reservations.

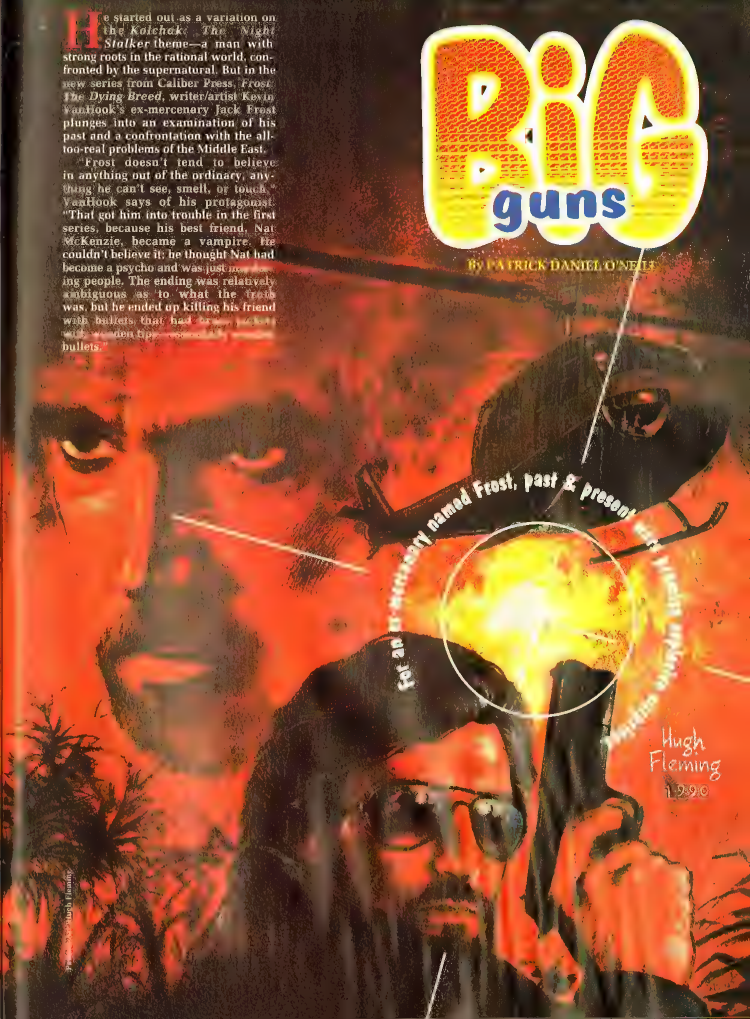
"I would have mixed feelings about a sequel if we weren't involved in it. I would love to write a sequel but, to be perfectly honest, the process of writing and developing the first *Rocketeer* script over five years is something I wouldn't want to have to go through under the same circumstances. Danny and I would want to be able to compress the amount of time and torture and not have to worry about whether we were going to be fired off the job every week. With a different commitment from the studio, I would do it again in a second."

BIG guns

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

He started out as a variation on the *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* theme—a man with strong roots in the rational world, confronted by the supernatural. But in the new series from Caliber Press, *Frost: The Dying Breed*, writer/artist Kevin VanHook's ex-mercenary Jack Frost plunges into an examination of his past and a confrontation with the all-too-real problems of the Middle East.

"Frost doesn't tend to believe in anything out of the ordinary, anything he can't see, smell, or touch," VanHook says of his protagonist. "That got him into trouble in the first series, because his best friend, Nat McKenzie, became a vampire. He couldn't believe it; he thought Nat had become a psycho and was just [illegible] ing people. The ending was relatively ambiguous as to what the truth was, but he ended up killing his friend with bullets that had been packed with wooden tips [illegible] bullets."



Jack Frost's latest adventure began 20 years ago in a skirmish he'll find himself fighting all over again.

Long before they would battle each other, Frost fought alongside Connors, the possible traitor, and Sol, the future vampire.

we see parallels between the action 20 years ago and the action today. He runs into the same people in many of the same situations."

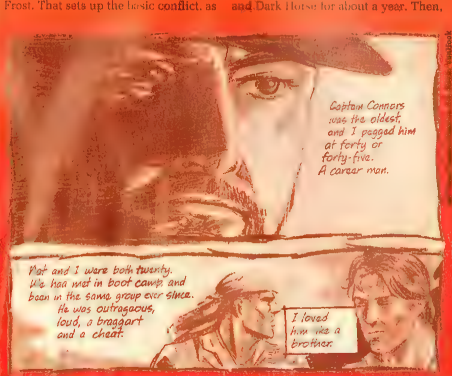
As he investigates the possible betrayal, Frost gets pulled into a situation in Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa near Saudi Arabia. He must try to rescue a politician's daughter who is kidnapped in retaliation for American activities in the Middle East. "That's where he runs into his former platoon member, Captain Connors, who's now running a mercenary band," VanHook says. "The two sets of stories, present-day and Vietnam, constantly make references to each other, in an attempt to establish a real continuity. It makes sense to tie it together," VanHook comments. "It's basically a story of betrayal and friendship—and a bit of a mystery, as you're led to believe that Connors might have been a traitor 20 years ago."

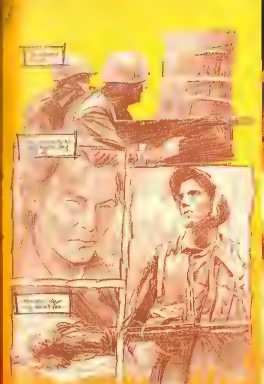
While VanHook is responsible for nearly all the interior art (Ken Bruzenak is the letterer), the covers are by Australian painter Hugh Fleming. "They're very photo-realistic; they look like they belong on the covers of adventure novels," VanHook says.

A comics professional since 1984, when he did some work for Pacific Comics, VanHook went into illustration and graphic arts, when Pacific went out of business. "I did the original *Jack Frost* series and a few other things for Amazing Comics, then I was the art director for Innovation Comics when they first formed," VanHook recalls. "I drew the first issue and a half of *Newstralia*. I developed a color separation system, and my wife and I worked on that for Innovation and Dark Horse for about a year. Then,

VanHook has divorced the current storyline from the previous series' genre overtones, a move he made once before. "There was a one-shot from Caliber Press, *Frost*, that dealt with more straightforward, good guy/bad guys adventure," VanHook notes. "He was tracking down the murderer of a woman who was a witness to a gun-running and dope-smuggling deal."

As the self-taught creator tells it, *The Dying Breed* opens as Frost is on vacation, attempting to escape from the problems of his past life, problems that won't let him go. "While we tell the present-day story, the first half of each book deals with his time in Vietnam," VanHook says. "The Vietnam scenes are all done in fully rendered pastel tones, shot at half-shades. Those sequences set up people we meet in the present day that Frost hasn't seen in several years. He begins to think there was an act of betrayal 20 years ago when his platoon was ambushed by the Viet Cong. In the present day, the person who should have died—the point man—20 years ago, is found alive. The past comes back to haunt Frost. That sets up the basic conflict, as


Captain Connors was the oldest, and I pegged him at forty or forty-five. A career man.
Nat and I were both twenty. We had met in boot camp and been in the same group ever since. He was outrageous, loud, a braggart and a cheat.
I loved him like a brother.



With the return of his old captain, Frost finds himself reliving the Vietnam War in more ways than one.

I became the art director for Caliber Press. I wrote, pencilled and inked the adaptation of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Around the third issue, I left the staff job at Caliber, because the drain on my time had gotten to be too much. I was shorting both the staff job and the freelance work.

"*The Dying Breed* is my best work; I'm proud of *Rocky Horror*, but I think my drawing and pacing are much more cohesive and consistent now."

Since most comics seem to need something more than straight action-adventure to draw an audience, VanHook's elimination of the supernatural angles seems counterproductive. "The supernatural element isn't dropped so much as this particular storyline doesn't deal with it," he explains. "Stephen Bissette wrote the introduction to the original set of books, and he felt I was going to become like *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*—and he meant it as a compliment. That's exactly what I *didn't* want it to be. I loved that series and if I ever got a chance to do an adaptation of it, I would jump on it, but I still find it hard to believe there could be a monster a week or a monster a month.

Even as Frost struggles for his life in the modern Middle East, memories of his Vietnam experiences burn within him.

Contents ©91 Hugh Fleming

Hugh O. Fleming 1991

Despite *Frost's* similarities to *Kolchak, The Night Stalker, The Dying Breed* will stay dead this time around

Frost shows off what his creator, Kevin VanHook, thinks may be one of his greatest appeals.

"The first story was a situation in which the vampire angle came out of a normal setting and interrupted Frost's life," VanHook continues. "I don't want the supernatural to be that commonplace. If this series is well received, I'm going to do a new miniseries called *The Trials of Jack Frost*, in which the world finds out that Frost killed Nat and Nancy McKenzie. The bodies are ordered to be exhumed—and they're not there. A local satanic cult group has dug them up, pulled the wooden bullets from Nat's heart and pulled the stake from Nancy's chest. Nat's back. We'll pull in the supernatural again. This time, we'll explore the fact that what little humanity was left in Nat has gone; he has been to Hell and back, and didn't like it."

Mercenary-like characters, armed to the teeth, and often with service in Vietnam, have become fairly popular in comics, and VanHook admits he's riding a trend. However, he sees the parallels and the pitfalls.

"*Frost* has been compared to First's original *Jon Sable* series in reviews. It *is* a lot like *Sable*, but in the current series, you'll see more of a *Punisher* feeling. It's not as restrained as *Sable*.

"Part of the reason for the newfound interest in these types of characters is the very nature of the guys in tight suits," he suggests. "For a while, that was *all* you could get. In the early '80s, Howard Chaykin and Mike Grell showed you could do a slightly above-average guy in action-adventure without super-powers, and it could sell, if it were told well in creative story stories. Punisher was kicking around as neither fish nor fowl—a muscular superhero type who soon joins Frank Miller kicked off an interesting run.

"A large part of the popularity of these characters—big guns and blood 'n' guts; I tend to do blood 'n' guts off-panel—comes out of the Reagan years: Conservatism, Rambo, patriotism all have helped sell these books," VanHook observes. "The movies have made comics fans want to see the same kind of things in comics. *Terminator* and *Predator* have been successful for *Dark Horse*; I think that, even with the science-fiction overtones, they're still real big guys with big guns."

He knows, however, that he's backing a trend by publishing in black-and-white. "I don't know how well a black-and-white adventure book will do these days. The original *Jack Frost* sold 24-25,000 copies per issue in the black-and-white heyday. At this point, it's hard to tell how it will do. It's even hard to know what qualifies as *successful* at this time. I know it'll be a comedown from the 60-65,000 sales of *Rocky Horror*."

(continued on page 66)

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Can the residents of Toontown e[illegible]ies. Dip-like destruction of their port?

PRESERVING BETTY BOOP

Betty Boop's still swinging, thanks to ASIFA.

By BOB MILLER

Photo: Robert Stone

With every cel sale, the International Animated Film Society honors our cartoon heritage.

The residents of Toontown are in trouble. While *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* celebrated the heritage of animated cartoons, many of its stars are imperiled by a fate worse than Judge Doom's acidic Dip:

Spontaneous combustion.

Before 1950, many cartoons were made in nitrate film, which is highly unstable. Many prints have literally crumbled to dust. UCLA's Film and Television Archives has original nitrate prints to negatives of titles from Iwerks, George Pal, Van Beuren, Warner Bros. and Fleischer studios, and scattered rarities from Terrytoons and Walter Lantz. For some cartoons, these are *the only existing prints.* Unfortunately, UCLA lacks the financial resources to transfer all that they have to safety stock, so they give top priority to restoring feature films.

Fortunately, an organization exists to help preserve cartoon classics: ASIFA/Hollywood, a chapter of the International Animated Film Association.

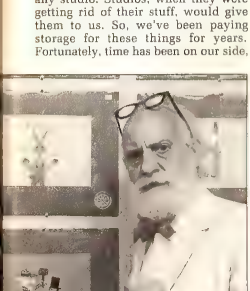
"We earmark contributions to UCLA for specific films. And it's something I see we'll be doing more and more of in the future. I think it's important," says composer and voice actor Will Ryan, a former president of ASIFA. "I would commend them for saving some of the classic films or the little-known films, newsreels and occasional shorts. People over there are not unaware of what they have, but they have to deal with this in an even-handed way as the money comes in."

Under Ryan's direction, ASIFA/Hollywood began their preservation program with an initial grant of $1,500. Their first selection: "Grampy's Indoor Outing," a black and white Betty Boop

cartoon from 1936, for "its relative low cost to preserve, its originality and humor, a high-visibility star and its use of one of Fleischer's innovative 3-D background sets."

Money for this preservation effort comes from the membership dues, contributions and fund-raisers, such as the annual Animation Arts Festival, or, informally, the "cel sale."

"This began in June Foray's backyard, back when cels were an actual curiosity item," Will Ryan reveals. "Usually, people would throw them away, cut them up and destroy them. Or you could go to Disneyland and actually pay all of $4 for one. Over the last 20 years, we've amassed one of the largest collections of cels outside of any studio. Studios, when they were getting rid of their stuff, would give them to us. So, we've been paying storage for these things for years. Fortunately, time has been on our side,

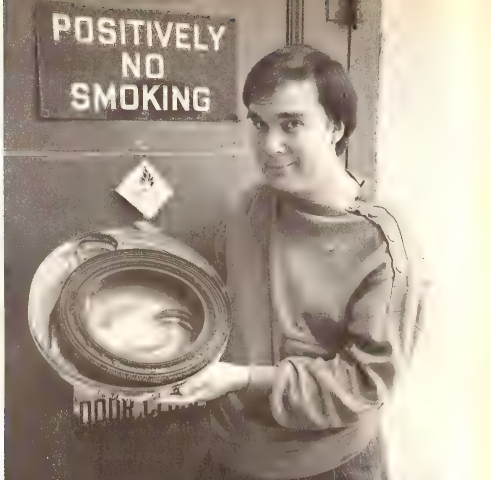


Two immortal legends check out some animation cels at ASIFA/Hollywood's annual Animation Art Festival & Cel Sale. They are Bill (Bullwinkle) Scott and Hans (Snidely Whiplash) Conreid.

and it has reached a point where it has been worth it. That was a nice investment in the future.

"We do have lots of interesting cels. Many of them are from award-winning commercials, TV series and specials, and theatrical shorts. And a few with recognizable characters, commercial spokesmen for cereals and TV series characters."

Once a year, these cels are made available at the Animation Arts Festival, which is more than just a "cel sale." The event is held at shopping malls, where visitors can find animators drawing, ink and paint demonstrations, demonstrations of computer animation, and voice actors re-creating their roles in cartoons such as *Rocky & Bullwinkle* and *Smurfs*. Otherwise, as Ryan says, "they just hang around and talk to folks. It's a fun gathering."



Former ASIFA president Will Ryan shows where Toons go to die. That's a film can of disintegrating nitrate stock in his hands.

Photo: Bob Miller

ASIFA began in 1960 when a group of international animators—among them John Hubley, John Halas and Bill Littlejohn—met in Annecy, France. They affiliated themselves with UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) to form ASIFA, which stands for L'Association Internationale du Film d'Animation (The International Animated Film Association), whose purpose was "to further the art of animation and to promote international understanding through animation."

The organization quickly spread, opening chapters in Toronto, New York, San Francisco, Washington, DC, Chicago, and finally, Hollywood, which became the largest ASIFA chapter in the world.

"Our membership from Disney is as large as the entire membership in some chapters in other countries," Ryan says. ASIFA's members include animation's all-time greats, such as Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, Walter Lantz, Friz Freleng, Chuck Jones, June Foray (a former president), Richard Williams, Ward Kimball and animation fan Ray Bradbury.

In November, ASIFA/Hollywood holds its annual Annie Awards banquet, which is "similar to the Academy Awards, except this is just for the animation field," says Ryan. "People from studios that you work with on a daily basis and people that you haven't seen in 20 years are there, paying homage to those whose work we all admire."

Annie Awards are given to animators, animation producers, voice actors, layout people or anyone else involved in animation. Past recipients include Max and Dave Fleischer, Walter Lantz, Tex Avery, Walt Disney, Ken Anderson, Eric Larson, Daws Butler, Clarence Nash, Sterling Holloway, Preston Blair, John Halas and Bob Abel.

(continued on page 66)

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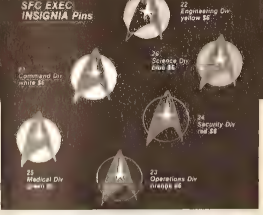

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Without Jean VanderPyl, Fred Flintstone's wife &

Speaking of Wilma...

the Jetsons' mechanical maid would be speechless.

By J. DOOLEY

For more than 50 years, Jean VanderPyl's voice characterizations have entertained animation enthusiasts around the globe. Surviving media changes and technological advances, VanderPyl, 71, has hundreds of voices to her credit, including that of America's favorite cavewife, Wilma Flintstone.

Long before television exploded into life, VanderPyl's dramatic talents graced the national airwaves via radio. She reluctantly admits to beginning her career right out of high school in 1937, and during radio's heyday, she worked with the top of the trade, Lucille Ball, Bob Hope, Red Skelton, Art Linkletter, Al Jolson and George Burns and Gracie Allen. Then, she turned her talents toward the new medium, television.

As television came to be the mecca of home entertainment, VanderPyl played cameo roles on many baby-boomer favorites, including *Leave It to Beaver*, *77 Sunset Strip*, *Dr. Kildare*, *Please Don't Eat the Daisies* and others, but her most unforgettable role came as Fred Flintstone's wife.

At the time, William Hanna and Joseph Barbera were casting for their latest TV animation projects. Fresh from New York, VanderPyl was ushered into Hanna-Barbera's fledgling Hollywood offices.

"It must have been late 1957 or early 1958," the actress recalls in her San Clemete home overlooking the Pacific Ocean. "And Joe and Bill had just gone into business for themselves. They had a little two-man office and a secretary. No studio or anything.

"I had a new agent, and he was a real go-getter. Joe was easy to see then, and my agent went in and gave a pitch for me. They had this little character coming up in a show [*Snooper & Blabbermouse*] and I auditioned for it.

"He [Barbera] was at a loss about hiring women, because up until that time, men had played all the female [animation] roles. The parts were all so small. The early stuff was mostly cats

All Flintstones & Jetsons Art & Characters: Copyright 1990 Hanna-Barbera Productions Inc.

Photo: John Pung/L.A. Times/Courtesy Jean VanderPyl

"I knew Wilma was going to be liked when *The Flintstones* was originally shown on television," says Jean VanderPyl.

chasing canaries, a lot of action and no words. They weren't used to much dialogue anyway, so they had men do it.

"That was my initial contact with Hanna-Barbera. I got the part. So, later, when other women's roles would come up, Joe would call and have me audition over the phone!

"Eventually, other actresses got on the stick too. Their agents got busy when they saw what was happening in the cartoon world. I firmly believe I was the *first* woman's voice for Hanna-Barbera."

Consequently, VanderPyl explains, "By the time they got around to *The Flintstones*, I had worked many different shows for Joe, so he included me in *all* of his auditions. But this time, they had us come into the studio...into *a* studio, because theirs still wasn't built yet. This was going to be something *big*, they hoped, so they had many people come in.

"I got Bea Benaderet to audition with me, because Joe wasn't familiar with her work. She was a well-known radio actress too, but people would recognize her face from television. She was Kate on *Petticoat Junction*. We came in and read both parts.

"She read Wilma and I read Betty. I read Wilma and *she* read Betty. That was really fun! Joe liked us both, and right then and there, he says, 'Who wants to be Wilma and who wants to be Betty?' That wouldn't happen today. I said I wanted to play Wilma. I just had a feeling for that character. I liked her better. He said, 'OK.'

"I really admire the characters from *The Flintstones*," she confesses. "Mel Blanc [Barney Rubble], Alan Reed [Fred Flintstone], such wonderful guys. I knew them for many years. The four of us were all together on *The Burns & Allen Show*. That's one of the reasons why *The Flintstones* went as well as it did. We got along great. I think it was *felt* that we were all such good friends. That made it real—we all really loved each other. "

Recalls the actress, "It was all so casual and fun in those days. We would all read the script over and over, then we would come to the characters that weren't appointed yet. Joe would say, 'Jean, what do you have for this character? Let me hear a voice for this.' I would look at the little character and try a voice. Then, he would say, 'Bea, what have you got?' She would try a voice, then one of us would get the part." For most of the three seasons of *The Flintstones*, in fact, all of the female characters were played by either Benaderet or VanderPyl.

"Joe would show us the storyboards and then we would all read the script once around the table, aloud. Then, we all got up on mike and started recording. We stood up there and *acted* it. It was just like a radio show. We jumped around the studio and stage.

"There was a great deal of personal interplay between us. I remember, an example of that was when Pebbles [another one of VanderPyl's voices] was born. That last scene of Wilma in the hospital bed with Pebbles for the first time, I actually cried. I really did, because we were *acting* that part. I just had a few babies around that time and it was very real to me. Alan Reed had such a big heart, too; more than once, we got a little teary."

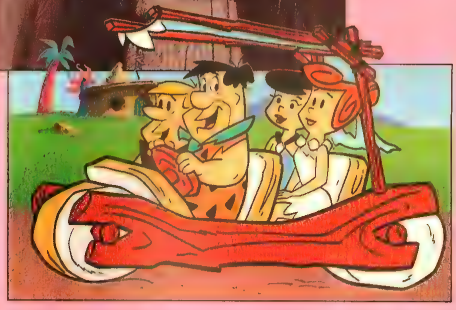
Thirty years after *The Flintstones* first aired, VanderPyl is amazed at the lasting impression her role as Wilma still has on people. "I've really only recently realized it," she sheepishly admits.

"I knew Wilma was going to be liked when *The Flintstones* was originally shown on television. Little kids liked me. The funny thing is, in the past few years, when I go places or meet people, they still go crazy!

"Recently, I was being interviewed on a talk show. The interviewer said something that made me go, *Boing*! He said, 'Jean, do you realize you probably have the best known female voice in the world?' I said, 'What?' He told me, 'Well, Wilma has been on somewhere for the past 30 years and is in 27 countries in English.' He had all the statistics down. 'You can go *anywhere* in the world and pull the voice out of the hat and they'd say, "Wow! I know

"Alan Reed had such a big heart," remembers VanderPyl of Fred's original voice.

"I think it was *felt* that we were all such good friends," notes VanderPyl of the chemistry between herself (in black), Alan Reed, Bea Benaderet and Mel Blanc that brought the cave couples to life.



you!" I never thought of it that way. I loved hearing that. It's really satisfying.

"My own son tells me, 'Mom, do you realize how famous you are?' I know this sounds awfully hammy, but being a radio actress, you're always anonymous, so I've never gotten any kind of star treatment.

"Now they come up to me in restaurants, the father carrying the kids, and *he* is the one grinning from ear to ear. His eyes light up and he says, 'I cannot believe I am meeting Wilma! You babysat me for six years.' It sure means much more than it ever did before.

"It's very gratifying and lots of fun to see people's faces light up. My water man was here this very morning and I told him I wasn't ready for him. I said I was up late the night before at the Hanna-Barbera *Flintstones* Anniversary party. 'What were you doing there?' he says. I told him that I do Wilma's voice. Well, he almost dropped the bottle! He said, 'What? You're kidding me!' So, then, he stayed and asked questions for 10 minutes. He ended up being late on his route. He said what so many of them do, 'Why, I grew up with you.' "

Of the many *Flintstones* episodes VanderPyl worked on, a few favorites stand out. One of them, *The Flintstones Meet Rockula and Frankenstone*, a TV special now available on video, holds a special place in her heart.

"The Flintstones win a prize on a talk show and go on vacation to Rockula's castle. Real cheesy. Well, Rockula, after 500 years in the basement, comes upstairs and thinks, since Wilma is asleep in his wife's bedroom, she is his long-lost wife. Wilma finally convinces him she isn't his wife, but he's already greatly enamored of her, wants her to marry him. Wilma says, 'But I can't! I am already married!' And then, John Stevenson (the voice of Mr. Slate), who plays Rockula, says, 'I can take care of that.' He's going to kill Fred. The Rubbles are there and there is a chase through the castle.

"Being a ham, I guess, the thing I liked most was at the script's end. They return home and Rockula follows. He says, 'I will move the castle over here stone by stone.' Wilma says, 'Well, all right, but you'll have to take Pebbles to her dancing lessons on Tuesday; I play tennis on Thursday, dah-dah-dah...' She does this female thing for a page-and-a-half of solid dialogue, of what he'll have to do, and you see him shrivel and become a bat and take off.

"The reason I have a soft spot for that script, is that last page-and-a-half of fast, funny dialogue. I did it straight through in one take. It worked out just fine. When I finished, the whole cast applauded. And *that* is a rare thing, to have your peers do that. It meant so much to me, Mel Blanc, Alan Reed, the whole bunch of them. When they give you that kind of recognition, it leaves a very warm feeling in your heart."

Another of VanderPyl's Hanna-Barbera creations, Rosie the Robot of *The Jetsons*, grew in popularity and is still a favorite with fans. VanderPyl was asked to create a distinctive voice for the futuristic family's new robot.

"I don't think anyone expected Rosie to go as far as she did," she recalls. "Rosie was born in 1963. I had worked on *The Jetsons* several times before she was introduced. The Jetsons went to a robot store to hire a maid. All the robots were paraded out in

One of VanderPyl's treasured moments from the series was the birth of Pebbles (whom she also voiced with "goos").

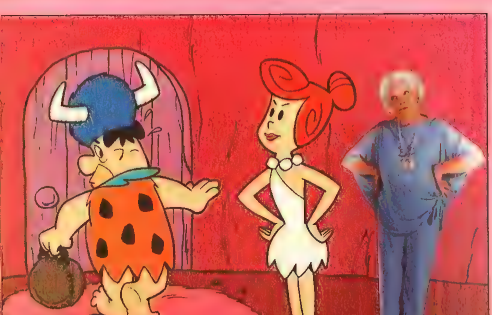
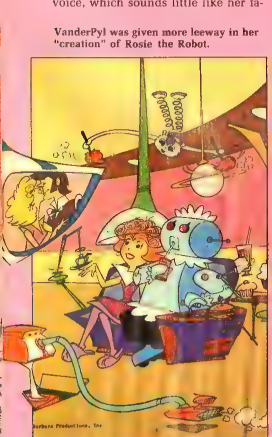


Photo: Courtesy Jean VanderPyl

front of Jane, for her to select from. Rosie was not old—broken down, but she was not the new French model." VanderPyl's voice transforms into that of a young French girl's. "Oh, *oui, monsieur!*'

"I did seven voices on that particular episode," she says in her own voice, which sounds little like her famous characters'. "More than I ever had in a single show. I did all the other maids auditioning."

VanderPyl was given more leeway in her "creation" of Rosie the Robot.



Having a freer hand in the development of Rosie than she did with Wilma, VanderPyl searched for just the right voice. "I really had to rack my brain for Rosie," she states. "I thought and I thought. Then, it came to me. I said, 'Wait a minute...*Hazel* [the '60s TV maid played by Shirley Booth]. This was the gal. She was older and a bit intimate with the boss, she told folks off, but she wasn't too bad about it. That's perfect for Rosie. That's where I got the idea for 'OK, Mr. J., never fear when Rosie's here.' They liked it and went with it."

Moving on in her years, VanderPyl remembers a *Jetsons* episode that again, she takes to heart. "My very favorite was the time Rosie feels really old. I guess that's why I relate to it now: she feels old and her circuits aren't working well anymore. She sees George Jetson looking at new model robots, although he's really there to buy replacement parts for Rosie, and she figures, 'That is all. This is it. The end of me. My time is up.' Then, she leaves a note for the family and heads for the junk heap. She's going to jump into the pressers to commit suicide. It's really sad. They rescue her and take her home."

Contrary to common belief, *The Jetsons* lasted a much shorter time than *The Flintstones*. The original series actually aired for only a single year, although that one season has been shown endlessly in syndication ever since. However, "About five or six years ago, the kids in college took up *The Jetsons* again," VanderPyl says happily. "Almost like the Trekkers, they started wearing *Jetsons* T-shirts and other stuff. My own son was wearing them. Hanna and Barbera said, 'Time to get on the bandwagon.' They decided to make two more years of *The Jetsons*, 40–42 new episodes, for syndication [STARLOG #101].

With the promise of a new animated, two-hour TV movie for NBC, VanderPyl is getting her wish for a *Flintstones* revival. Now, if only she could collect residuals on the original series.

"So," VanderPyl laughs, "they brought the original cast back. We were the oldest cast in Hollywood. George O'Hanlon [who played George Jetson, CS #15] was blind and in a wheelchair. He had had a stroke so they recorded him separately, and of course, Mel Blanc, Daws Butler and myself. Penny Singleton just turned 80, she's the original Jane Jetson, she got her voice back up. We all managed to match our original voices."

Later, most of the original cast was reunited for 1990's *Jetsons: The Movie*, including VanderPyl who played Rosie, Mrs. Spacely and Spacely's secretary, Miss Galaxy. Among the missing were the original voices of Elroy and Judy Jetson. "They had to find somebody to do Elroy for the movie. They auditioned all kinds of people to imitate that voice, because Daws Butler, who played Huckleberry Hound, Yogi Bear and Elroy died.

"Daws was a wonderful man. He was also the original Beany of *Beany & Cecil*. That's how he started his career. He liked to train other actors from all over the country, and Patric Zimmerman, the person who got the Elroy part, was one of Daws' students. For Patric, it was a special role because he was imitating his teacher's voice."

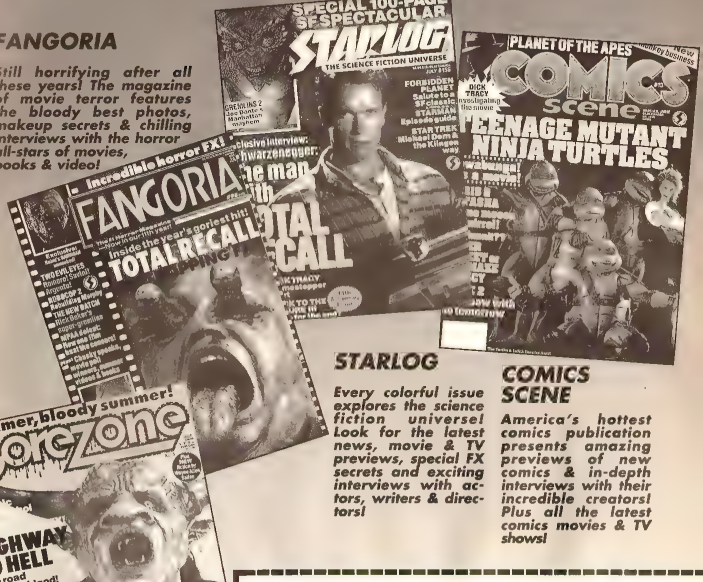
VanderPyl is less enthusiastic about the situation regarding Judy. "Janet Waldo [Judy Jetson] was *replaced*. I think it was to pick up a younger audience, but she's completely devastated."

The role of Judy in *Jetsons: The Movie* was undertaken instead by Tiffany, who was originally scheduled to sing a few songs to accompany Waldo's dialogue. "She [Tiffany] wouldn't do the songs unless she could do the part, too. So, they *cut out* Janet, who had done Judy all these years. They dubbed in all of Judy's lines with Tiffany. To me, that's just heartbreaking. After all these years, it's just *not* the same. Especially when it's such a part of what people have grown up with."

Both a critical disappointment and a box office failure, *Jetsons: The Movie* (now on videocassette) stands as more

(continued on page 66)

NEW WORLDS OF WONDER!



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VanderPyl

(continued from page 64)

than just a full-length cartoon. It marks the end of an era. Shortly after taping, George O'Hanlon died. "He passed away on the movie set," VanderPyl somberly says. "I went back in for pickups and rejects, and as I drove in the parking lot, he was being taken away in an ambulance. George was in doing pickups when he had a stroke. He went to the hospital and didn't live the day out. Right before that, at the end of the last *Jetsons* series, we lost Daws Butler. I'm almost superstitious about doing any more *Jetsons*. Who is going to go next?" Soon after *Jetsons: The Movie* was finished, Mel Blanc (Mr. Spacely, see STARLOG #102) died.

Although she still does some voice work, most recently resurrecting Winnie Witch for the *Fender Bender 500* segment of Hanna-Barbera's new morning program, *Wake, Rattle & Roll*, she is semi-retired. "I am walking with a cane these days," she sighs. "I'm on Social Security and a pension. Once in a while, I work when they have something." Surprisingly, after so many years of doing voice work, VanderPyl's residual income leaves much to be desired.

"I would be a wealthy lady if I had gotten residuals from *The Flintstones* all these years. What happened...in the '60s, even our own union [Screen Actors Guild] didn't realize that any TV show would play more than six runs. *The Flintstones* and *I Love Lucy* taught our union, and everyone else, that these things can go on *forever*.

"We *should* get residuals, but we don't. Even when you do get them, it drops so far. I got a bunch of back residuals a couple of weeks ago, for a year or so of shows, like 42 checks at once, for $19, $13.80, like that."

For her many fans, there is a slew of VanderPyl's work available on TV or in video stores. Her numerous characters appear in hundreds of Hanna-Barbera cartoons, including *Atom Ant, Hong Kong Fooey, Quick Draw McGraw, Tom & Jerry, Popeye, Magilla Gorilla* (VanderPyl played Magilla's friend, Ogee. "She always went around saying, 'Oh, gee!' so they called her Ogee."), and *The Flintstone Kids* (as Wilma's *mother*).

For the diehard admirer, some of her live action work pops up occasionally on replays of *Murder, She Wrote, Hardcastle & McCormick* and as Gladys Frisbee, the town biddy on *Petticoat Junction*.

Watching a slow moving train pass between her window and the ocean, Jean VanderPyl smiles thoughtfully. "What I really wish, is that they would revive *The Flintstones*!"

Boop

(continued from page 59)

A special award, the Windsor McCay, is presented to one who has been an animator for their entire career. Winners have included Art Babbitt, John Bray, Grim Natwick, Ward Kimball, Milt Kahl and Otto Messmer.

ASIFA/Hollywood is chartered with California as The International Animated Film Society. It's registered as a non-profit organization.

"As the International Animated Film Society, we are open to anyone—to fans, to devotees, and so on. When people join the organization in a professional role, then they're members of ASIFA/Hollywood as well," Ryan says. "So, by being two organizations, we can allow anyone to join. We have members not only from around the country but from around the world."

ASIFA/Hollywood offers free screenings for members and their guests throughout the year, often featuring movies like *Earth Girls Are Easy*, on which some members animated the title sequences.

"We aren't always serious, you know, dourly gazing at the latest eastern European import," Will Ryan remarks. "And I think that's best manifested by a wacky cartoon compilation one year by [animation historian] Jerry Beck and [*Mighty Mouse* director] John Kricfalusi, called *The World's Best Cartoons. Part One*. We alerted members to a screening of 20 Bob Clampett films at UCLA, and it was a revelation for many people who had never seen actual nitrate Technicolor prints of the original cartoon classics."

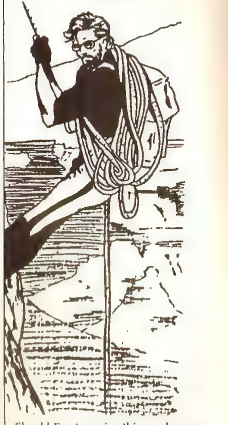
Other benefits include animation seminars, studio tours and parties and bi-monthly issues of *Inbetweener*, the newsletter filled with inside information about the industry. Professional members receive periodic issues of *AnimaFilm* from ASIFA/International in Europe.

"The least tangible benefit to members but probably the most important is the fact that they're helping to preserve our animated heritage," says Will Ryan, who adds: "After all, how would you like to spontaneously combust?"

Students under 25 can join the International Animated Film Society for $15; Devotees for $30, with $15 extra for international membership. For further information on ASIFA/Hollywood or other ASIFA branches, contact ASIFA/Hollywood; PO Box 787; Burbank, CA 91503; phone (818) 988-6505.

Frost

(continued from page 56)



Should Frost survive this much more realistic adventure, VanHook promises he'll send his hero back to the weird wars.

Is that kind of success the height of Kevin VanHook's aspirations? "Unlike many of the artists working in the independents, I don't despise the prostitution of selling my wares to Marvel or DC," he replies, laughing. "I would like to do that. I've been butting my head against the wall to do that for years. I did one job for Marvel, but I tried too hard to be *them* and not *me*, and it showed. I would like to work in the majors and do *my* kind of storytelling. The wonderful thing about working in the independents is the free rein you're given. I gave a plot to Gary Reed at Caliber, he asked me to expand it to four issues instead of three. I agreed and now he just sees them as I turn them in. He has suggestions sometimes, and I take them seriously, but most of the time, he doesn't butt in.

"But the consistency of working on a monthly assignment for Marvel or DC, with the greater sales and notoriety would be nice. I would like that; I'm human. If it doesn't happen, that's OK, too. I spent too much time being distracted by trying to reach for that and not focusing on what I was doing at the minute," Kevin VanHook recalls. "Now, I just try to do the best I can on what I'm doing and hope they'll come to me."

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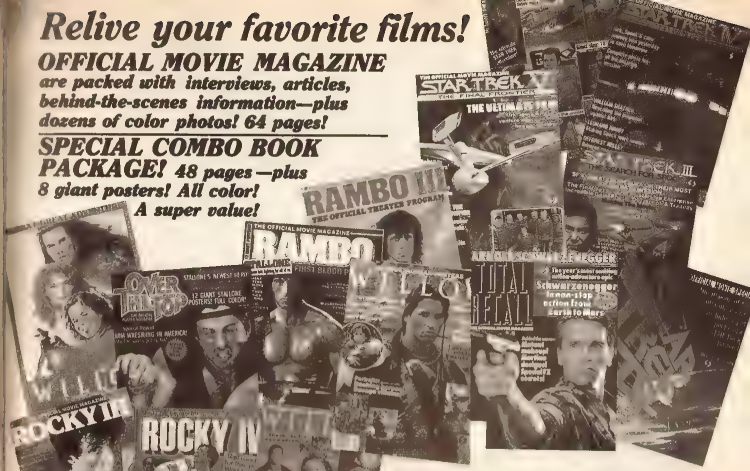

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COMICS REPORTER

Still Watching for "Watchmen"

The much-talked-about *Watchmen* film is currently off again—at least, that's what Terry Gilliam is assuming.

Gilliam was set to direct the film for producer Joel (*Die Hard*) Silver two years ago, but after shuffling from studio to studio and going through financing difficulties, the project's prospects don't appear encouraging.

"I don't have a clue what's going on there. Occasionally, I get a flurry of activity from Joel Silver, but I don't know where it is now—I assume it's at Fox," says Gilliam. "I don't think Joel has the money—I'm not even thinking about it anymore."

Gilliam says he would be happy if the project came together, but he's making no assumptions. "If it happens to come along, I'll think about it," he says.

"The *Watchmen* thing was an unfortunate bit of timing, because to put *Watchmen* together—it's a very expensive film—with a producer who's notorious for going over budget, and a director who had just gone $20 million over-budget [on *Baron Munchausen*], it's pretty hard to get anybody to hand over money under those circumstances," he laughs.

"I didn't think Joel could get it together, and my reputation was really terrible at that moment. His was notoriously questionable, and that film has got to cost a lot of money—it has to cost $40 million.

"This is not like *Batman*, this is an adult piece, and I couldn't see how, with that amount of money, they would allow us to do *Watchmen* as it *should* be." Gilliam and collaborator Charles McKeown made some revisions to the original Sam Hamm script, but the director says he doesn't know which version of the script Silver is currently carrying. "I really just lost contact with the whole thing. It's a big, expensive project!

"I have real fears about being able to do it as a two-hour film, because it's such a complex book. When you start cutting out all the details, you end up with something superficial and lightweight—it's *not* the book anymore," Terry Gilliam says. "Alan Moore wasn't certain how we could do it. We met with him several times, and he said better us than him!"

—*Kim Howard Johnson*

Will there be a movie? The Watchmen will be watching.

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COMICS SCREEN

These characters are being developed for other media. All projects are live-action unless specified. Those marked by an asterisk (*) have changed status since last listing. **Not everything listed will ultimately be made.** Abbreviations: S=script; D=director; P=producer; AN=animated; LA=live-action; HB=Hanna-Barbera; WB=Warner Bros.; RB=Rankin-Bass; U=Universal. **Attn. all pros:** Info to be added to this list is cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016. (Info as of 3/8/91)

* **The Addams Family.** Film. Orion. D: Barry Sonnenfeld. S: Caroline Thompson & Larry Wilson. Morticia: Anjelica Huston. Gomez: Raul Julia. Fester: Christopher Lloyd. Syndicated AN series *may* follow film.

The Airtight Garage. AN. S: Randy Lofficier.

* **Alias.** Film. U. S: David Goyer. P: Peter Lenkov, Sean Daniel.

The American. Film. P: Joel Silver. S: Mark Verheiden.

American Flagg! Film.

* **An American Tail 2: Fievel Goes West.** Sequel. Late '91 release. TV series. HB.

Annie. Sequel. D: L. Gilbert.

Ant-Man. Film.

Archie. Film. S: Nora & Delia Ephron. WB.

Arzach. Film. P: Kirk Thatcher.

The Avengers. Film. John Steed. S: Sam Hamm.

Baby Huey. New AN short. Universal.

* **Batman.** Sequel. S: Dan Waters. D: Tim Burton. Batman: Michael Keaton. Penguin: Danny DeVito. AN series debuts '92 on FBC.

Beetle Bailey. Film.

Beetlejuice. AN series. ABC, video & FBC. Film.

Blackhawk. Film. Amblin. S: Dan Aykroyd.

* **Blackman.** Film. Urban LA superhero.

Blade. Film. S: Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin.

* **Blinky Bill.** Australian AN film. P: Yoram Gross. '92.

Blondie. Film musical. Disney. S: Alfred Uhry. P: Francine LeFrak, Dean Young.

* **James Bond.** AN series, *Adventures of James Bond Jr.* P: Murakami Wolf Swenson. Fall '91.

Betty Boop. AN *Betty Boop's Hollywood Mystery.* CBS. Film. D: R. Fleischer.

* **Bonkers.** Bonkers D. Bobcat, crimefighter. Syndicated AN series. Disney. Bows '92.

Brenda Starr. Film. Shelley Duvall. FBC.

* **Darkwing Duck.** Syndicated AN series. Disney. Bows fall.

Deathlok. Film.

Dinosaurs for Hire. Film. S: Richard Finney & James Bonny. Fox. FX: Henson C Shop.

DNAgents. Film. UA.

Dr. Strange. Film. Zoetrope. D: Alex Cox. P: F. Coppola.

Dreamwalker. CBS TV film.

Fish Police Art: Copyright 1991 Hanna-Barbera Productions, Inc.

Hanna-Barbera's version of *Fish Police* hits the mean streets on CBS. Six episodes of "fish noir" are on the hook.

* **Bucky O'Hare.** AN series (13 episodes). Syndicated. P: Sunbow, IDDH, Claster TV. Mini-series trilogy preview airs June.

Bugs Bunny. *Tiny Toon Adventures* spin-offs: *Taz Mania* & *Elmyra's Family.*

Bullwinkle. *Boris & Natasha.* Series on video.

* **Capitol Critters.** AN series. Steven Bocho Prod. ABC.

Captain America. Film. Arena show tour w/ Spidey opens spring '91.

Captain Planet. AN series. Live stage show planned.

* **Casper the Friendly Ghost.** Old cartoons repackaged for syndication. Also film.

* **Cats.** AN. Amblin London. Based on musical for '93.

Cathy. AN TV. CBS.

Charlie Chan. Film. Chan: B.D. Wong. D: Fred Levinson. P: Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde.

Chicken Man. AN spoof series. Calico.

Chip & Dale. *Rescue Rangers* airing. Film due '91.

City of Darkness. Film. S: Patrick Cirillo & Joe Gayton. P: M. Douglas, R. Bieber. Col.

* **Conan.** Film sequel. S: Charles Edward Pogue.

* **Danger Squad.** Film. P/D: Leo Fong. W/D: Philip R. Cable.

Daredevil. TV series. P: * **Elfquest.** Film & TV project. Abby Lou Productions, Freedom Distribution.

Evangeline. Film. Funnybook Films.

* **Family Dog.** AN series. CBS. P: S. Spielberg, Tim Burton, D. Klein. Premiere delayed.

Fantastic Four. Film. Neue Constantin. P: Bernd Eichinger.

Far Side. AN TV.

Fearless Fosdick. LA & AN TV projects. Nelvana.

Felix the Cat. AN film.

* **Fish Police.** AN series. HB.

O'Hare Art: Michael Golden/Trademark & Copyright 1991 Continuity Graphics/Nelvana, Inc.

Mike Golden's *Bucky O'Hare* is up against the Toads in an animated series previewing in June and premiering in syndication this fall.

CBS. Pilot S: Jeanne Romano. Six scripts ordered.

The Flash. TV. CBS. WB.

* **The Flintstones.** Film. Fred: John Goodman. U/Amblin. S: Jeanne Romano. Shooting delayed till '92 or '93.

Fu Manchu. Film. *Secret of Fu Manchu:* David Carradine.

Garfield. Saturday a.m. series. *Garfield & Friends.*

Ghost Rider. Film. NLine.

* **Goofy.** Syndicated AN series *Goof Troop.* Disney. Bows '93.

The Green Arrow. TV.

* **The Green Hornet.** Film. S: D. Mancini. P: D. Kirschner, U. (see item)

Green Lantern. Film.

Grimjack. Film.

Gumby. Film.

Heroes for Hire. Film.

Honkytonk Sue. Film.

* **Hopalong Cassidy.** Film. S: Gerald Popper, Jenny Rosenthal. Alligator Prods.

"Flash" Lights

Danny Bilson and Paul De Meo will shortly be interviewed on the big screen with *The Rocketeer* (see page 17). In the meantime, their TV series, *The Flash*, continues, approximately a full season's scripts already under its belt. Bilson boasts that creatively, the show is on the upswing.

"Out of the first 14 episodes," Bilson notes, "three or four were really up to my standards. But I also think that our worst episodes are better than any 8:00 p.m. adventure show in the past 10 years. We've been very experimental and have tried to do something different every week."

De Meo offers that the writing staff, headed by John Nance and Howard Chaykin, have settled into a definite rhythm.

"We've tried to have at least two big *Flash* FX sequences in every episode, and believe me, it's getting harder and harder to keep finding new applications for his power. We've also tried very hard to have some kind of emotional hook to each story. The story isn't always revolving around Barry Allen or some criminal who's out to get the Flash but rather that something is happening to somebody or something around him."

—*Mare Shapiro*

They're altogether spooky: Morticia (Anjelica Huston) and Gomez (Raul Julia), heads of *The Addams Family*.

Addams Family Photo: Jean Pagliuso/Copyright 1991 Orion Pictures

* **Human Target.** Pilot. ABC. W/ Rick Springfield, Clarence Clemons. Series in fall?

Incredible Hulk. TV movie.

Inspector Gadget. LA TV series. DIC. Family Channel.

Iron Man. Film. D: Stuart Gordon. U.

The Jetsons. LA film. U.

Jo Jo. Film. P: Lee Caplin. S: Mike Chapman.

Jonny Quest. Film.

* **Judge Dredd.** Film. S: Howard Chaykin & John Moore. P: Charles Lippincott. Surge Licensing (now licensor) is pushing for more licensees.

Justice League. TV movie pilot. NBC. Lorimar.

Kaanga. Film. S: (D) Geoff Edwards, S. Bernard. P: L. Caplin, B. Edwards, T. Adams.

Li'l Abner. TV. P: Max & Micheline Keller.

The Punisher. Film. Debuts on LIVE Video this month.

Radio Boy. AN. RB.

Reid Fleming. Film. S: creator David Boswell. P: M. Weisman, J. Loeb II.

Richie Rich. Film. P: J. Silver, J. Davis.

* **RoboCop 3.** S: Frank Miller & Fred Dekker (D). Robo: Robert Burke. Shooting.

* **The Rocketeer.** Film. Disney. Rocketeer: Bill Campbell. D: Joe Johnston. S: Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo. P: L. & C. Gordon, L. Levin. (see article)

* **Roger Rabbit.** Sequel film. D: Rob Minkoff. New short "Hare in My Soup" in works.

Rover Dangerfield. AN film.

The Saint. Film. P: Robert Evans. Paramount.

Scooby Doo. Film. WB.

Secret Agent X-9. AN film.

Sgt. Preston of the Yukon. TV revival projected.

Sgt. Rock. Film. P: Joel Silver, Bob Zemeckis. S: Jeff Boam. Being written. WB.

The Shadow. Film. S: David Koepp. P: Martin Bregman. U.

The She-Hulk. Film. S/D: Larry Cohen. W/B. Nielsen.

The Silver Surfer. Film.

The Simpsons. AN. FBC.

Speed Racer. Film. S: Peter Lenkov. P: J. Silver.

* **Spider-Man.** TV pilot. New World. Arena show w/ Cap A opens spring '91. Stage musical. S & lyrics: B. Harman. Music: K. Herrmann. EXP: Stan Lee, D. J. Nash, J. Calamari.

Sub-Mariner. Film.

Suicide Squad. CBS TV pilot. Lorimar.

Superboy. Syndicated TV.

Superman. *Superman: The New Movie.* S: Mark Jones & Cary Bates. To lense FL.

* **Super Mario Bros.** LA film. S: Barry Morrow.

Swamp Thing. TV. USA.

Tales from the Crypt. HBO.

Tarzan. LA series. Worldvision. Shoots spring. 25 episodes. Debuts fall.

* **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** AN series. CBS. & syndication. Film sequel out. D: M. Pressman. New Line. (see article) Live show tours.

Terry & the Pirates. Film. S: J. Feiffer. P: G. Kirkwood, J. Hyde. EXP: S. Weston.

Thor. Film. Stonebridge.

Time Beavers. AN TV series. Kushner-Locke.

Tin-Tin. AN series. Nelvana. Ellipse. HBO fall '91. First adaptation: "The Crab with the Golden Claws."

Tom & Jerry. AN, 75-minute film due '92. P/D: Phil Roman. AN *Tom & Jerry Kids* airing.

* **Toxic Crusaders.** Animated series based on *Toxic Avenger* (13 episodes). Toys debut soon.

Trouble with Girls. Film. 20th Fox & Funnybook Films. S: Will Jacobs & Gerard Jones. P: M. Pepler, N. Tabachnick.

Two-Fisted Tales. Half-hour anthology pilot. FBC.

Valentina. 13-episode half-hour TV series. Stars Dementra Hampton. Reteitalia.

Vampirella. Films. S/D: Jim Wynorski.

V for Vendetta. Film. WB.

WARP. Film. S/P: Mark Victor & Michael Grais.

* **Watchmen.** Film. S: Sam Hamm. P: Joel Silver. D: Terry Gilliam. (see item)

Weird Al. AN film. Based on Hudson Talbott books. Amblin London/U. For '92.

Why I Hate Saturn. TV.

Wizard of Id. Film. S: Steven de Souza, Dana Olsen.

Wolverine. Film.

Wonder Woman. TV series.

* **The X-Men.** Film. Carolco. AN five-episode mini-series. FBC. Marvel Prod.

* **Yogi Bear.** *Yo, Yogi.* AN TV series. Features teen versions of characters. HB. NBC.

Zen. Film. AN series.

Zippyvision. Film. S: Bill Griffith & Diane Noomin.

Zorro. TV series. Airs on Family Channel.

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Hornet's Sting

There are no actors, no director, just me," chuckles screenwriter Don Mancini about his status as the lone creative talent on board the *Green Hornet* movie currently getting off the blocks at Universal.

Mancini, who recently completed the script for *Child's Play 3* for *Hornet* producer David Kirschner, refuses to divulge any story particulars of his very early script draft. But he does offer his view of the film and a few crumbs of information.

"The film will have the Green Hornet and Kato, of course," says Mancini, "and there will be a love interest. There will be one main villain, but he'll be more like a real person, as opposed to the type of villains Batman and Dick Tracy have to deal with. The whole thing with the Green Hornet is that he's much more real than Batman, and that's the tack I'm taking with the script. You have to have some degree of stylization to justify somebody dressing up like this and fighting crime. But the stylization is going to be much more real than what we saw in *Batman*."

Mancini claims that *The Green Hornet* will be a pretty close to literal translation of the current comics and, to a certain degree, the old radio shows.

"We'll be taking a few liberties," he admits. "There are diehard Green Hornet fans, but people basically don't know what the Green Hornet's about beyond the fact that he's a newspaper reporter who fights crime. My take is that Britt Reid is not the haunted, brooding person that Batman is. This Green Hornet is going to be anything but.

"The Green Hornet in this movie will be somebody who loves his work; somebody who loves fighting crime and kicking butt. That's going to be a major distinction in making *The Green Hornet* a much lighter movie than *Batman*.

"The tone I'm trying to take with this script is that the Green Hornet is like an urban Lone Ranger," concludes Don Mancini, alluding to the blood relationship that ties the heroes together (the Ranger is the Hornet's ancestor). "Only instead of Tonto, you have Kato, and instead of Silver, you have the Black Beauty."

—Marc Shapiro

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